Galaxy MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 1958

35¢

JOIN NOW

By

FINN O'DONNEVAN

A SUSPENSE STORY OF THE DEADLIEST MIND BET EVER MADE

•

THE STRANGE PLANET NEXT DOOR

By

WILLY LEY

AND OTHER STORIES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAGAZINE STORE
400 East Broadway
Glendale 5, California

Special Christmas Gift Offers

THE NEW GIANT 196 page GALAXY

Give the Gift You'd Like to Receive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

See next page

To give Santa an outsize helping hand, we will — for 30 days only — fulfill your new and renewal and gift subsciptions to the giant new 196-page Galaxy at the old rate of $3.50 for 12 issues. This offer will not be repeated, so send in your order today.

12 ISSUES
OF THE
196 PAGE
Galaxy Magazine
$3.50
per sub.

#1

THE NEW GALAXY NOVELS
6 different during the year—**$1.50**
Additional subscriptions
$1.35

#2

COMBINATION
GALAXY 12 ISSUES
NOVELS 6 ISSUES
Both for **$4.75**
Additional subscriptions
$4.60

#3

We admit it—we're pushovers for the Xmas spirit. "Don't do it," our accountant pleads. "We can't afford to sell subscriptions at those prices!" But our eye goes past his piteous figure to the distant corners of the land. "Readers straining budgets to introduce GALAXY to friends and relatives," we must, "and have enough scratch left over for their own subscriptions. We **can't** leave the job to them!" we thunder. "GALAXY must bear its share of the burden! And not only that—by the Lord Harry, we'll even include handsome Gift Card Announcements with their names as donors!" Out slouches our accountant, muttering, "All right, but they'd better get their orders in before December 15, 1958," so rush in your order today.

Please enter Special Gift Subscriptions to the following and send gift card announcements.

I enclose .....

Name.....
Address.....
City..... **State**.....
Offer #..... **Price**.....

Name.....
Address.....
City..... **State**.....
Offer #..... **Price**.....

Name.....
Address.....
City..... **State**.....
Offer #..... **Price**.....

Name.....
Address.....
City..... **State**.....
Offer #..... **Price**.....

Name.....
Address.....
City..... **State**.....
Offer #..... **Price**.....

My Name.....
Address.....
City..... **State**.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DECEMBER, 1958 **Galaxy** VOL. 17, NO. 2

MAGAZINE

Also Published in
Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Finland and Sweden

CONTENTS

NOVELLA

JOIN NOW ..... *by Finn O'Donnevan* 6

NOVELET

ULLWARD'S RETREAT ..... *by Jack Vance* 66

SHORT STORIES

NIGHTMARE WITH ZEPPELINS ..... *by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth* 44

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST ..... *by Fritz Leiber* 90

BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL—Third Part of Four

TIME KILLER ..... *by Robert Sheckley* 104

SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ..... *by Willy Ley* 53

The Strange Planet Next Door

FEATURES

EDITOR'S PAGE ..... *by H. L. Gold* 4

FORECAST 43

GALAXY'S FIVE STAR SHELF ..... *by Floyd C. Gale* 100

Cover by GAUGHAN illustrating, in fanciful fashion, THE STRANGE PLANET NEXT DOOR by Willy Ley as the area above the mud storms may be explored and perhaps cultivated centuries from now.

ROBERT M. GUINN, Publisher — H. L. GOLD, Editor

WILLY LEY, Science Editor — W. I. VAN DER POEL, Art Director

JOAN J. De MARIO, Asst. to the Publisher — SONDRA GRESEN, Asst. to Editor

GALAXY MAGAZINE is published monthly by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. Main offices: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y. 35c per copy. Subscription: (12 copies) $3.50 per year in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South and Central America and U. S. Possessions. Elsewhere $4.50. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, N. Y. Copyright, New York 1958, by Galaxy Publishing Corporation, Robert M. Guinn, president. All rights, including translations reserved. All material submitted must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction, and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coincidental.

Printed in the U.S.A. by The Guinn Co., Inc., N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT'S ALL YOURS

UP there is the recruiting title of the second editorial in GALAXY, way back in November 1950, and around it rallied the most enthusiastic army of crusading readers science fiction has ever seen. Below that fighting slogan appeared a declaration that had never been made before — and is now being made again:

"Most new magazines, especially in the science fiction field, assure their readers that they are the readers' magazines and that suggestions are welcome and will be followed. The assurance, however, is hedged with unspoken reservations.

"GALAXY offers the same assurance . . . but there are no reservations of any kind whatever. This *is*, literally and completely, your magazine. Your suggestions *will* be followed. Makeup, art, editorial content, everything from cover to cover, including the cover, *you* will decide for us.

"There is, in other words, nothing inflexible about GALAXY. Repeat, nothing. Not a single thing. A year from now, it may look entirely different, and every change will be the result of alert study of readers' wishes and willingness to put those wishes into concrete form."

New magazine? GALAXY? After eight years that have made it the most widely read science fiction magazine in the world, with editions in the U.S., Canada, England, Germany, Italy, France (which includes Belgium and Switzerland), Finland, Sweden, with more being negotiated? A *new* magazine?

Yes, GALAXY, a new magazine!

How new? New how?

• First, size. Our daredevil experiment with the GALAXY Novels — a hard-headed bet that upgrading would pay off in these days of less and less for more and more — is paying off resoundingly. Readers know a lavish reading bargain when they see one. All right, we resolved, we'll give them a GALAXY magazine even more generous — 196 pages — a walloping 50% more pages than just about all our competitors are offering!

• Next, quality. Not only will we not sacrifice quality — we'll intensify our campaign to improve it. Hold on a moment and we will tell you just how you can help in that improvement.

• Next, frequency. We kid you not at all — really good science fiction is, from the editorial side of the desk, harder to come by than perfect diamonds. It has to be mined out of authors with patience and care and tact — and blood

(Continued on page 142)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

five exceptional ideas about the world to come...

★ interplanetary colonization ★ relative immortality
★ rivalry between the stars ★ ESP ★ matter transportation

five exceptional s-f writers...

★ **F. L. Wallace** ★ **Damon Knight**
★ **James E. Gunn** ★ **J. T. McIntosh** ★ **Theodore Sturgeon**

. . . Now collected in one exceptional volume for the permanent library of every reader of Galaxy Magazine

FIVE GALAXY SHORT NOVELS

Edited by

H. L. GOLD

Published Oct. 2 Price $3.95
Use coupon to order your copy.

GALAXY PUBLISHING CORP.
421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N.Y.

Please send me ..... copies of FIVE GALAXY SHORT NOVELS as soon as copies come off the press. I enclose ☐ check, ☐ cash, ☐ money order in the amount of $.....

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....ZONE...STATE....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Join Now

By FINN O'DONNEVAN

Crompton had made the most chancy possible mind bet — for winning it meant he literally had to collect himself on two crazy worlds!

Illustrated by GOODMAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALISTAIR Crompton ran into trouble during his first hour in Port Newton. On a lonely side street, two ragged men crowded him against a wall. One of them carried a little penknife, and the other had a strip of hardened tape across his knuckles. They seemed to be vagrants and they weren't quite sober.

The taller ragged man put his thick hand on Crompton's chest. "This is one of 'em, huh, Charlie?"

"Yeah," Charlie said. "He's a Splitter. Let's bust him up."

Crompton knew they must have recognized him from his distinctly shaped briefcase, which contained his Mikkleton Projector. Perhaps he should have put it into a regular suitcase. But he hadn't expected any trouble.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He still hadn't recovered from the long journey between Earth and Mars. He'd had cramps on the high-gravity climb to Station Three, and vertigo on the free-fall to Exchange Point. He had barely pulled himself together by the time Mars Station One was reached. There he had gone through the tedious routine of customs, immigration and health, and learned how to use the auxiliary stomach-lung. Still spacesick, he had been given his visa and shuttled down to Port Newton.

BOTH derelicts crowded close against him. "Lousy damned Splitter," Charlie said.

"Robbing *real* men of work."

"Mars be better off if we take care of him right now."

"*All* the planets be better off."

There it was, that fanatical hatred that some men had for the few with the courage and stability to Split. Crompton, trying to keep his voice steady, pointed out that Splitters took work from no one. On the contrary, they did work that regular men didn't want.

"Then how come *we're* out of work?" Charlie challenged.

Crompton resisted the urge to tell them they were obviously unemployable. Instead, he smiled stiffly and said he had come to Mars to reintegrate. That would leave a job open . . .

But the derelicts didn't want to hear anything reasonable. They wanted a fight, and perhaps a murder.

"Come on," Charlie said. "Fight me. I'll even put away the knife. Or fight Ed here."

"Yeah," Ed said, rubbing the tape across his knuckles.

Five years ago, Crompton would have taken on the men, together or singly, and to hell with the consequences. But that was before he had Split. Now his fear was almost uncontrollable. The leering faces swam in front of him and he could feel his knees trembling.

"Come on, *fight*," Charlie said, hitting him on the shoulder.

Crompton wanted desperately to strike back, but he couldn't. The fighting part of himself was gone, Split away, working on Venus.

"He's not going to fight," Charlie said. "Okay, let's bust up his briefcase."

Crompton hugged it to his chest. Without the Projector, he couldn't reintegrate. And without reintegration, he might as well not have risked leaving Earth.

"Please," Crompton said, "I'm willing to pay—"

Ed pulled back his fist.

"Officer!" Crompton shouted. "Over here!"

The vagrants looked around. Crompton shook free and sprinted away. He had used the oldest trick in the books; but perhaps it was new on Mars.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Safe in a populated section of Port Newton, but trembling with reaction, he boarded the trans-planet rapido. It would take him to Elderberg, near the Martian South Pole. At that notorious city, Crompton hoped to find a man named Edgar Loomis.

He had to find him; Loomis was crucial to him. For Loomis was one of the segments into which Crompton had Split.

THE Splitting technique had been devised originally to aid in the conquest of Venus. The planet held great riches for an Earth almost depleted of essential metals, fossil fuels and uranium ores. But above all, Venus had room, lots of room for an overcrowded humanity.

Mars could support only a small population, and the planet-bearing stars were too far away. Venus was the unlimited hope. But before the planet could be utilized, it had to be conquered. And this took men.

Venus swallowed men and never gave them back. The mortality rate among the first pioneers was close to ninety per cent. When the news got back to Earth, the stream of recruits dried to a trickle.

But the frontier had to be opened.

Experiments were made with growth-androids. The most successful of these, the Durier chassis, looked, heard, tasted, smelled and felt like a human. Its sponge-connection brain was more than adequate. It should have worked perfectly. It didn't.

The Durier chassis could be programmed like any other machine. But it could not think. It was incapable of foresight, reflection or initiative. It did not possess intelligence. Without these qualities, the Duriers were worthless on Venus.

They were tried anyhow, and they died in the swamps and jungles. When the thousandth Durier tripped, fell into three inches of mud and was drowned, their inadequacy was accepted.

Further experiments were run, but there was no way to induce human capabilities in the Duriers. That could only be supplied by humans. The chassis had to be operated by a human mind — or even a portion of a human mind.

The ancient phenomenon of schizophrenia was re-examined. In the past, all attention had been devoted toward healing splits in a human mind, synthesizing the two or more personalities that sometimes appeared in a single body. Now, experimenting on volunteers, scientists tried to deepen latent splits, harden the schisms, evoke the id, super-ego and libido components of the mind.

Separation was easier than synthesis. The scientists were able to develop separate personality ten-

JOIN NOW LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dencies in a mind, along the distinct lines of the furious and aggressive id, the conscientious, hard-working super-ego, and the pleasure-seeking libido.

The groundwork was prepared. There were potential mind-segments to run the Durier chassis, without loss of the original personality. But the development of Venus still had to wait until Andrew Mikkleton developed his projector.

A MIKKLETON Projector could be attached between Man and Durier chassis, linking the active human brain to the passive sponge-connection receptacle. The Projector imposed its own electrical similarity patterns between brain and brain, allowing them to become a temporary unity. With the Projector, a man could send his id or libido — but not his super-ego—into the Durier chassis.

When Projector contact was broken, the Durier *lived*, its brain occupied by a personality separate and different from the original. Out of one man could come three.

The government set up a volunteer program for the extreme-stability types needed for such a Split. The id-personalities — dominant, aggressive types — were badly needed on Venus. Earth, with its overpopulation stresses, wanted to retain the calm, conscientious super-ego types. And sterile Mars, developed by private corporations into a dozen great pleasure resorts, could use the insatiable pleasure-principle Duriers as escorts always eager for a new sensation.

Alistair Crompton passed the stability tests. He decided to Split with full knowledge of the consequences. Five-year Splitting contracts sold for good prices. Crompton negotiated his with care, and used the proceeds to buy a plantation in the New York suburb of Antarctica.

He was set for life. But there were certain dangers.

His embodied id or libido, now two separate people, might not want to reintegrate with him; and there was no law to make them. One or both might be dead. In either case, Crompton would have to live out his life wtih a big chunk of his personality missing. And this would be highly unsatisfactory.

Those were the risks. But the reward was great.

Before Splitting, Alistair Crompton had been a pleasant, normal man of thirty. After Splitting, with two-thirds of himself missing, with the super-ego rigid within him, he changed. He became petty, punctilious, cautious, nervous, puritanical, resentful, driven, circumspect and repressed.

Crompton didn't like the changes in himself. For five years, he lived, made his plans, waited, and wondered what the other portions of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

[illegible] were like, what they were doing on Mars and Venus.

Now the contract time was up. Crompton, with his plantation waiting for him, could reintegrate, take back the missing parts of himself through the Mikkleton Projector, return to Earth, live in peace and prosperity . . .

If he was able.

ALONG the flat, monotonous Martian plains, the rapido crawled past low gray shrubs struggling for existence in the cold, thin air, through swampy regions of dull green tundra. Crompton kept occupied with a book of crossword puzzles. When the conductor announced they were crossing the Grand Canal, he looked up in momentary interest. But it was merely a shallowly sloping bed left by a vanished river. The vegetation in its muddy bottom was dark green, almost black. Crompton returned to his puzzle.

They went through the Orange Desert, and stopped at little stations where bearded, wide-hatted immigrants jeeped in for their vitamin concentrates and the microfilm *Sunday Times*. And finally they reached the outskirts of Elderberg.

This town was the focus for all South Polar mining and farming operations. But primarily it was a resort for the rich, who came to wallow in its Longevity Baths, and for the sheer novelty of the trip. The region, warmed to 67 degrees Fahrenheit by volcanic action, was the warmest place on Mars. Inhabitants usually referred to it as the Tropics.

It was here that Edgar Loomis, Crompton's pleasure-principle, lived and worked.

Crompton checked into a small motel, then joined the crowds of brightly dressed men and women who promenaded on Elderberg's quaint immovable sidewalks. He was able to recognize the male and female Durier chassis at once. The primary models in both sexes had been designed according to a very thorough survey of tourist preferences, and so, of course, were even more stereotyped than the tourists themselves.

Crompton peered into the gambling palaces, gawked at the shops selling Genuine Artifacts of the Missing Martian Race, peered into the novelty cocktail lounges and the glittering restaurants. He jumped with alarm when accosted by a painted young woman who invited him to Mama Tele's House, where low gravity made everything that was good better. He brushed off her and a dozen like her, and sat down in a little park to collect his thoughts.

Elderberg lay around him, replete in its pleasures, gaudy in its vices, a painted Jezebel whom Crompton rejected with a curl of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his now puritanical lips. And yet, for all his curled lips, averted eyes and nostrils indrawn in revulsion, he longed for the humanity of vice as an alternative to his present bleak and sterile existence.

But, sadly, Elderberg could not corrupt him. Perhaps Edgar Loomis would supply the missing ingredient.

CROMPTON began his search in the hotels, taking them in alphabetic order. Clerks at the first three said they had no idea where Loomis was; and if he should be found, there was a little matter of unpaid bills. The fourth thought that Loomis might have joined the big prospecting rush at Saddle Mountain. The fifth hotel, a recent establishment, had only heard of Loomis. At the sixth, a brightly overdressed young woman laughed with a slight hysteric edge when she heard Loomis' name; but she refused to give any information.

At the seventh hotel, the clerk told him that Edgar Loomis occupied Suite 314. He was not in at present, but could probably be found in the Red Planet Saloon.

Crompton asked directions. Then, his heart beating rapidly, he made his way into the older section of Elderberg.

Here the hotels were stained and weathered, the paints worn, the plastics pitted by the seasonal dust storms. Here the gambling halls were crowded close together, and the dance halls blared their mirth at midday and midnight.

Here the budget tourists clustered with their cameras and recorders, in search of local color, hoping to encounter at a safe yet photographable distance the wicked glamor that led zealous promoters to call Elderberg the Ninevah of Three Planets. And here were the safari shops, outfitting parties for the famed descent into Xanadu Caverns or the long sandcar drive to Devil's Twist.

Here also was the infamous Dream Shop, selling every narcotic known to Man, still in business despite legislative efforts to shut it down. And here the sidewalk hawkers sold bits of alleged Martian drystone carving, or anything else you might desire.

Crompton found the Red Planet Saloon, entered, and waited until he could see through the dense clouds of tobacco and kif. He looked at the tourists in their gaily colored shirts standing at the long bar, stared at the quick-talking guides and the dour rock miners. He looked at the gambling tables with their chattering women, and their men with the prized faint orange Martian tan that takes, it is said, a month to acquire.

Then, unmistakably, he saw Loomis.

Loomis was at the faro table,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tourist woman who, at a first glance, looked thirty, at a second glance forty, and after a long careful look perhaps forty-five. She was gambling ardently, and Loomis was watching her with an amused smile.

He was tall and slender, and elegant with his hairline moustache. His manner of dress was best expressed by the crossword puzzle word *nappy*. He had mouse-brown hair sleeked back on a narrow skull. A woman not too choosy might possibly have called him handsome.

He didn't resemble Crompton; but there was an affinity, a pull, an instant sense of *rapport* that all Split members possess. Mind called to mind, the parts calling for the whole, with an almost telepathic intensity. And Loomis, sensing it, raised his head and looked full at Crompton.

Crompton began walking toward him. Loomis whispered to the blonde, left the faro table and met Crompton in the middle of the floor.

"Who are you?" Loomis asked.

"Alistair Crompton. You're Loomis? I have the original body and — do you know what I'm talking about?"

"Yes, of course," Loomis said. "I'd been wondering if you'd show up. Hmm."

He looked Crompton up and with what he saw.

"All right," Loomis said, "we'll go up to my suite and have a talk. Might as well get that over with now."

He looked at Crompton again, with undisguised distaste, and led him out of the saloon.

LOOMIS' suite was a wonder and a revelation. Crompton almost stumbled as his feet sank into the deep-piled oriental rug. The light in the room was dim and golden, and a constant succession of faint and disturbing shadows writhed and twisted across the walls, taking on human shapes, coiling and closing with each other, transmuting into animals and the blotchy forms of children's nightmares, and disappearing into the mosaic ceiling. Crompton had heard of shadow songs, but had never before witnessed one.

Loomis said, "It's playing a rather fragile little piece called 'Descent to Kartherum.' How do you like it?"

"It's — impressive," said Crompton. "It must be expensive."

"I daresay," Loomis said carelessly. "It was a gift. Won't you sit down?"

Crompton settled into a deep armchair that conformed to his contours. The chair began, very gently, to massage his back.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Something to drink?" Loomis asked.

Crompton nodded dumbly. Now he noticed the perfumes in the air, a complex and shifting mixture of spice and sweetness, with the barest hint of putrefaction.

"That smell—"

"It takes getting used to," Loomis said. "It's an olfactory sonata composed as an accompaniment to the shadow song. But I'll turn it off — it's the kind of thing one must become educated to."

He did so, and turned on something else. Crompton heard a melody that seemed to originate in his own head. The tune was slow and sensuous and unbearably poignant, and it seemed to Crompton that he had heard it somewhere before, in another time and place.

"It's called 'Déjà Vu,'" Loomis said. "Direct aural transmission technique. Pleasant little thing, isn't it?"

Crompton knew that Loomis was trying to impress him. And he *was* impressed. As Loomis poured drinks, Crompton looked around the room, at the sculptures, drapes, furniture and gadgets; he made an estimate of costs, added transportation charges and taxes from Terra, and totaled the result.

Loomis had done dismayingly well as a gigilo.

Loomis handed Crompton a glass. "It's mead," he said. "Quite the vogue in Elderberg this season. Tell me what you think of it."

Crompton sipped the honeyed beverage. "Delicious," he said. "Costly, I suppose."

"Quite. But then the best is only barely sufficient, don't you think?"

CROMPTON didn't answer. He looked hard at Loomis and saw the signs of a decaying Durier chassis. Carefully he observed the neat, handsome features, the Martian tan, the smooth, mousy brown hair, the careless elegance of the clothes, the faint crows' feet in the corners of the eyes, the sunken cheeks on which was a trace of cosmetics. He observed Loomis' habitual self-indulgent smile, the disdainful twist to his lips, the way his nervous fingers stroked a piece of brocade, the complacent slump of his body against the exquisite furniture.

In Loomis resided all Crompton's potentialities for pleasure, taken from him and set up as an entity in itself. Loomis, the pure pleasure-principle, vitally necessary to the Crompton mind-body.

"You've done very nicely," Crompton said. "As I suppose you know, I've come to Mars to reintegrate you."

"Not interested," Loomis said.

"You mean you *won't?*"

"Exactly," Loomis said. "You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

don't seem to realize that I'm performing an extremely valuable service here. You see, today everything is biased toward the poor, as though there were some special virtue in improvidence. Yet the rich have their needs and necessities, too. These needs are unlike the needs of the poor, but no less urgent. The poor require food, shelter, medical attention. The government provides these admirably.

"But what about the needs of the rich? People laugh at the idea of a rich man having problems, but does mere possession of credit exempt him from having problems? It does not! Quite the contrary, wealth increases need and sharpens necessity, often leaving a rich man in a more truly necessitous condition than his poor brother."

Crompton had to remind himself that this was a pure pleasure-principle speaking. He asked, "In that case, why doesn't the rich man give up his wealth?"

"Why doesn't a poor man give up his poverty?" Loomis asked in return. "No, it can't be done; we must accept the conditions that life has imposed upon us. The burden of the rich is heavy; still, they must bear it, and seek aid where they can. The rich need sympathy; and I am very sympathetic. The rich need people around them who can truly enjoy luxury, and teach *them* how to enjoy it; and few, I think, enjoy and appreciate the luxuries of the rich as well as I do. And their women, Crompton! They have *their* needs — urgent, pressing needs, which their husbands frequently cannot fulfill due to the tensions under which they live.

"These women cannot entrust themselves to any lout off the streets. They are nervous, highly bred, suspicious, these women, and very suggestible. They need nuance and subtlety. They need the attentions of a man of soaring imagination, yet possessed of an exquisite sensibility and an inexhaustible appetite. Such men are all too rare. My talents happen to lie in that particular direction. Therefore, I plan to go on exercising them."

LOOMIS leaned back with a smile. Crompton gazed at him with a certain horror. He found it difficult to believe that this corrupt, self-satisfied seducer, this creature with the morals of a mink was part of himself. But he was, and necessary to the fusion.

"You don't seem to realize," Crompton said, "that you are incomplete, unfinished. You must have the same drive toward self-realization that I have. And it's possible only through reintegration."

"Perfectly true," Loomis agreed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then—"

"No," said Loomis. "I have an urge toward self-completion. But I have a much stronger urge to go on living exactly as I am living, in a manner I find eminently satisfactory. Luxury has its compensations, you know."

"Perhaps you've forgotten," Crompton said, "that you are living in a Durier chassis which has an estimated competence of twelve years. Five of them are gone. If you don't reintegrate, you have a maximum of seven more years of life. A *maximum*, mind you. Durier chassis have been known to break down in less."

"THAT'S true," Loomis admitted, frowning slightly.

"Reintegration won't be so bad," Crompton said, in what he hoped was a winning manner. "Your pleasure impulse won't be lost. It'll merely be put into better proportion."

Loomis thought hard, drawing on his pale ivory cigarette. Then he looked Crompton full in the face and said, "No."

"But your future—"

"I'm simply not the sort of person who can worry about the future," Loomis said, with a smug smile. "It's enough for me to live through each day, savoring it to the fullest. Seven years from now — why, who knows what will happen seven years from now? Seven years is an eternity! Something will probably turn up."

Crompton resisted a strong desire to throttle some sense into Loomis. Of course the pleasure-principle lived only in the ever-present now, giving no thought to a distant and uncertain future. Seven years' time was unthinkable to the now-centered Loomis. He should have thought of that.

Keeping his voice calm, Crompton said, "Nothing will turn up. In seven years — seven short years — you will die."

Loomis shrugged. "It's my policy never to worry past Thursday. Tell you what, old man. I'll look you up in three or four years and we'll discuss it then."

"It'll never work," Crompton told him. "You'll be on Mars, I'll be on Earth, and our other component will be on Venus. We'll never get together in time. Besides, you won't even remember."

"We'll see, we'll see," Loomis said, glancing at his watch. "And now, if you don't mind, I'm expecting a visitor soon—"

Crompton arose. "If you change your mind, I'm staying at the Blue Moon Motel. I'll just be here for another day or two."

"Have a pleasant stay," Loomis said. "Be sure to see the Xanadu Caverns. Fabulous sight!"

Thoroughly numbed, Crompton left Loomis' ornate suite and returned to his motel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THAT evening, Crompton ate at a snack counter, consuming a Marsburger and a Red Malted. At a newsstand, he found a book of acrostics. He returned to his room, filled in three puzzles, and went to sleep.

The next day, he tried to decide what to do. There seemed to be no way of convincing Loomis. Should he go to Venus and find Dan Stack, the other missing portion of his personality? No, that would be worse than useless. Even if Stack were willing to reintegrate, they would still be missing a vital third of themselves — Loomis, the all-important pleasure-principle. Two-thirds would crave completion more passionately than one-third, and be in more desperate straits without it. And Loomis would not be convinced.

Under the circumstances, Crompton's only course was to return to Earth un-reintegrated, and make whatever adjustments he could. There was, after all, a humorless joy in hard, dedicated work, a grim pleasure in steadiness, circumspection, dependability. The frugal virtues of the super-ego were not to be overlooked.

But he found it difficult to convince himself. And with a heavy heart he telephoned Elderberg Depot and made a reservation on the evening rapido to Port Newton.

As he was packing, an hour before the rapido left, his door was suddenly flung open. Edgar Loomis stepped in, looked quickly around, shut the door behind him and locked it.

"I've changed my mind," Loomis said. "I've decided to reintegrate."

Crompton's first feeling of joy was stifled in a wave of suspicion.

"What made you change your mind?" he asked.

"Does it really matter?" Loomis said. "Can't we—"

"I want to know why."

"Well, it's a little difficult to explain. You see, I had just—"

There was a heavy rapping on the door. Loomis turned pale under his orange tan. "Please!"

"Tell me," Crompton implacably insisted.

Beads of sweat appeared on Loomis' forehead. "Just one of those things," he said quickly. "Sometimes husbands don't appreciate one's little attentions to their wives. Even the rich can be shockingly bourgeois at times. So, once or twice a year, I find it expedient to take a little vacation in a cave I've furnished at All Diamond Mountain. It's really very comfortable, though the food is necessarily plain. In a few weeks, the whole thing blows over."

AS the knocking at the door grew louder, a bass voice shouted, "I know you're in there,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Loomis! Come out or I'll break down this damned door and wrap it around your slimy neck!"

Loomis' hands were trembling uncontrollably. "I have a dread of physical violence. Couldn't we simply reintegrate and then I'll explain—"

"I want to know why you didn't go to your cave this time," Crompton said.

They heard the sound of a body slamming heavily against the door.

Loomis said shrilly, "It was all your fault, Crompton! Your coming here unsettled me. Me, caught in the act! I barely escaped, with that fantastic muscular neanderthal idiot of a husband following me around town, searching the saloons and hotels, threatening to break my limbs. I didn't have enough ready cash to hire a sandcar and there was no time to pawn my jewelry. And the police just grinned and refused to protect me! Crompton, *please!*"

The door bulged under repeated blows, and the lock began to give. Crompton turned to his personality component, grateful that Loomis' essential inadequacy had shown up in time.

Quickly, he unzipped his briefcase and removed the Mikkleton Projector. He fastened the main electrodes to his forehead, while Loomis plugged his own connections into the tiny holes behind each ear which had been left for that purpose. Crompton adjusted the similarity-patterns on the control board until they were in phase.

"Ready?" he asked.

Loomis nodded.

CROMPTON closed the switch. Loomis gasped and his Durier chassis collapsed, folding in on itself. At the same moment, Crompton's knees buckled as though a weight had landed on his shoulders.

The lock gave way and the door slammed open. A short, red-eyed, thickly constructed, black-haired man came into the room.

"*Where is he?*" the man shouted.

"Reintegrated," said Crompton, letting him see the projector before it was packed into its briefcase.

"Oh," said the black-haired man, caught between rage and shock. He goggled down at the body stretched on the floor. "Pretty hard to realize it's just a deactivated chassis . . ."

Crompton zipped the briefcase. "That's all it is."

"But reintegration . . ." said the man. He shuddered, looked at Crompton with concern. "You all right?"

"As well as can be expected. One down, one to go."

"Then you must be damned uncomfortable. Anything I can do?"

Using Crompton's lips, Loomis unexpectedly spoke up. "Well,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yes, if you'd be so good." Crompton tried to shut him up, but Loomis pushed right on. "I understand your wife liked to come here because of the decor."

"So what?" demanded the man, starting to bristle again.

"It made him look good," Loomis said, nodding Crompton's head at the inert chassis. "A handsome setting like this would make any man look good."

The man glanced around. "I guess it would. What have you got in mind?"

"I have no use for these furnishings and jewelry, and you — well, let's say you might benefit by them. Sure to, as a matter of fact. If you could see your way toward taking them off my hands . . ."

Crompton stayed out of the bargaining, which, after the chassis' cremation and payment of Loomis' bills, provided him with nearly three thousand badly needed dollars. Instead of having to hang around straightening out the financial mess Loomis had left, Crompton, with the help of his wily pleasure-principle, was able to catch the evening rapido.

THE long ride across the Martian plains came as a much needed breathing spell. It gave Crompton and Loomis a chance to make a true acquaintance, and to settle basic problems which two minds in one body are bound to encounter.

There was no question of ascendency. Crompton was the basic personality; under normal circumstances, Loomis could not take over, and had no desire to do so. Loomis accepted his passive role and resigned himself, with typical ease, to the status of commentator, adviser and general well-wisher.

But there was no reintegration. Crompton and Loomis existed in the one mind like planet and moon, independent but closely related entities, cautiously testing each other out, unwilling and unable to relinquish personal autonomy. A certain amount of seepage was taking place, of course; but the fusion of a single stable personality out of its discrete elements could not take place until Dan Stack, the third component, had entered.

The rapido reached Port Newton, and Crompton shuttled to Mars Station One. He went through customs, immigration and health, and caught the hopover to Exchange Point. There he had to wait fifteen days for a Venus-bound ship to depart. The brisk young ticket clerk spoke about the problems of "opposition" and "economical orbits," but neither Crompton nor Loomis understood what he was talking about.

At last the Venus ship lifted. Crompton set to work learning Basic Yggdra, root language of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Venusian aboriginals. Loomis, for the first time in his life, tried to work too, tackling the complexities of Yggdra. He quickly became bored with its elaborate conjugations and declensions, but persisted to the best of his ability, and marveled at the studious, hard-working Crompton.

In return, Crompton made a few tentative advances into the appreciation of beauty. Aided and instructed by Loomis, he attended the ship's concerts, looked at the paintings in the main salon, and stared long and earnestly at the brilliant glowing stars from the ship's observation port. It all seemed a considerable waste of time, but he persevered.

ON the tenth day out, their cooperation was threatened by the wife of a second-generation Venusian planter whom Crompton met in the observation port. She had been on Mars for a tuberculosis cure and now was going home.

She was small, bright-eyed and vivacious, with a slender figure and glistening black hair. She was bored by the long passage through space.

They went to the ship's lounge. After four martinis, Crompton was able to relax and let Loomis come to the fore, which he did with a will. Loomis danced with her to the ship's phonograph, then generously receded, leaving Crompton in command, nervous, flushed, tanglefooted and enormously pleased. And it was *Crompton* who led her back to the table, *Crompton* who made small talk with her, and *Crompton* who touched her hand, while the complacent Loomis looked on.

At nearly two A.M., ship's time, the girl left, after pointedly mentioning her room number. Crompton reeled deliriously back to his own room on B deck, and collapsed happily on the bed.

"Well?" Loomis asked.

"Well what?"

"Let's go. The invitation was clear enough."

"There was no invitation," Crompton said, puzzled.

"She mentioned her room number," Loomis pointed out. "That, together with the other events of the evening, constitutes almost a command."

"I can't believe it!"

"Take my word," Loomis told him. "The invitation is clear, the course is open. Onward!"

"No, no," Crompton said, flooded with his own super-ego. "I wouldn't — I mean I don't — I couldn't—"

"Lack of experience is no excuse," declared Loomis. "Nature is exceedingly generous in helping one to discover her ways. Consider also the fact that creatures without a hundredth of your intelligence manage to perform in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exemplary fashion what you find so baffling. Surely you won't let a mouse outdo you!"

Crompton got to his feet, wiped his glowing forehead, and took two tentative steps toward the door. Then he wheeled and sat down on the bed.

"Absolutely not," he said firmly.

"But why?"

"It would be unethical. The young lady is married."

"Marriage," Loomis said patiently, "is a man-made institution. But before marriage there were men and women, and certain modes between them. Natural laws always take precedence over human legislation."

"It's immoral," Crompton said, without much vigor.

"NOT at all," Loomis assured him. "You are unmarried, so no possible blame can attach to *you* for your actions. The young lady *is* married. That's her responsibility, perhaps also her problem. But remember, she is a human being capable of making her own decisions, not some mere chattel of her husband. Her decision has been made and we must respect her integrity in the matter; to do otherwise would be insulting. Finally, there is the husband. He will know nothing of this and therefore will not be injured by it. In fact, he will gain. For his wife, in recompense, will be unusually pleasant to him. He will assume that this is because of his appealing qualities and his ego will be bolstered thereby. So you see, Crompton, everyone will gain and no one will lose."

"Sheer sophistry," Crompton said, standing up again and moving toward the door.

"Atta boy," Loomis cheered him on.

Crompton grinned idiotically and opened the door. Then a thought struck him and he slammed the door shut and lay down on the bed.

"Absolutely not," Crompton said.

"What's the matter now?" asked Loomis in dismay.

"The reasons you gave me may or may not be sound. At the present time, I can't judge. But one thing I do know. *I will not engage in anything of this sort while you're watching!*"

"But — damn it, I'm you! You're me! We're two parts of one personality!"

"Not yet, we aren't," Crompton said. "We exist now as schizoid parts, two people in one body. Later, after reintegration has taken place . . . But under the present circumstances, my sense of decency forbids me from doing what you suggest. It's unthinkable! I don't wish to discuss the matter any further."

At that, Loomis lost his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

temper. The pleasure-principle, thwarted from the fundamental expression of himself, raved and shouted and called Crompton many hard names, the least of which was "yellow-livered coward."

His anger set up reverberations in Crompton's mind and echoed throughout their entire shared organism. The schism lines between the two personalities deepened; new fissures appeared, and the break threatened to isolate the two minds in true Jekyll-and-Hyde fashion.

CROMPTON'S dominant personality carried him past that. But, in a furious rage at Loomis, his mind began to produce antidols. Those still not fully understood little entities, like leucocytes in the bloodstream, had the task of expunging pain and walling off the sore spot in the mind.

Loomis shied back in fright as the antidols began building their *cordon sanitaire* around him, crowding him, folding him back on himself, walling him off.

"Crompton! Please!"

Loomis was in danger of being completely and irrevocably sealed off, lost forever in a black corner of the Crompton mind. And lost with him would be any chance for reintegration. But Crompton managed to regain his stability in time. The flow of antidols stopped; the wall dissolved, and Loomis shakily regained his position.

For a while, however, they weren't on speaking terms. Loomis sulked and brooded for an entire day, and swore he would never forgive Crompton's brutality. But above all he was a sensualist, living forever in the moment, forgetful of the past, incapable of worry about the future. His resentments passed quickly, leaving him serene and amused as always.

Crompton was not so forgetful, but he recognized his responsibilities as the dominant part of the personality. He worked to maintain the cooperation, and the two personalities were soon operating at their fullest potential sympathy.

By mutual consent, they avoided the company of the young lady. The rest of the trip passed quickly, and at last Venus was reached.

THEY were set down in Satellite Three, where they passed through customs, immigration and health. They received shots for Creeping Fever, Venus Plague, Knight's Disease, and Big Itch. They were given powders in case of Swamp Decay and pills to ward off Bluefoot. Finally they were permitted to take the shuttle down to the mainland embarkation depot of Port New Haarlem.

This city, on the western shore of the sluggish Inland Zee, was situated in Venus' temperate zone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still they were uncomfortably warm after the chill, invigorating climate of Mars. Here they saw their first Venusian aboriginals outside a circus; saw hundreds of them, in fact. The natives averaged five feet in height, and their scaly armored hides showed their remote lizard ancestry. Along the sidewalks they walked erect; but often, to avoid crowds, they moved across the vertical sides of buildings, clinging with the sucker disks on their hands, feet, knees and forearms.

Many buildings had barbed wire to protect their windows, for these detribalized natives were reputed to be thieves, and their only sport was assassination.

Crompton spent a day in the city, then took a helicopter to East Marsh, the last known address of Dan Stack. The ride was a monotonous whirring and flapping through dense cloud banks which blocked all view of the surface. The search-radar pinged sharply, hunting for the shifting inversion zones where the dreaded Venusian tornado, the *zicre,* sometimes burst into violent life. But the winds were gentle on this trip, and Crompton slept most of the way.

East Marsh was a busy shipping port on a tributary of the Inland Zee. Crompton found the boarding house where Stack had lived, run by a couple now in their eighties and showing signs of senility. They had been very fond of Stack. Dan always meant well, though he was a bit hasty sometimes. They assured Crompton that the affair of the Morrison girl wasn't true. Dan must have been falsely accused. Dan would never do such a thing to a poor defenseless girl.

"WHERE can I find Dan?" Crompton asked.

"Ah," said the old man, blinking his watery eyes, "didn't you know Dan left here? Three years ago, it was."

"East Marsh was too dull for him," the old lady said, with a touch of venom. "So he borrowed our little nest egg and left in the middle of the night, while we were sleeping."

"Didn't want to bother us," the old man quickly explained. "Wanted to seek his fortune, Dan did. And I wouldn't be surprised but what he found it. Had the stuff of a real man, Dan did."

"Where did he go?"

"Couldn't rightly say," the old man said. "He never wrote us. Never much of a hand with words, Dan. But Billy Davis saw him in Ou-Barkar that time he drove his semi there with a load of potatoes."

"When was that?"

"Maybe two years ago," the old lady said. "That's the last we ever heard of Dan. Venus is a big place, mister."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crompton thanked the old couple. He tried to locate Billy Davis for further information, but found that he was working as third mate of a pocket freighter. The ship had sailed a month ago and was making stops at all the nasty little ports on the Southern Inland Zee.

"Well," Crompton said, "there's only one thing to do. We'll have to go to Ou-Barkar."

"I suppose so," Loomis said. "But frankly, old man, I'm beginning to wonder about this Stack fellow."

"I am too," Crompton admitted. "But he's part of us and we need him in the reintegration."

"I guess we do," Loomis said. "Lead on, oh, Elder Brother."

Crompton led on. He caught a helicopter to Depotsville and a bus to St. Denis. Here he was able to hitch a ride in a semi bound across the marshes to Ou-Barkar with a load of insecticides. The driver was glad of company across the desolate Wetlands.

During that fourteen-hour trip, Crompton learned much about Venus.

To this raw new planet came the pioneering types, spiritual and sometimes actual descendants of the American frontiersmen, Boer farmers, Israeli kibbutzniks and Australian ranchers. Whole men and Splitters fought side by side for a foothold on the fertile steppes, the ore-rich mountains, and by the shores of the warm seas.

They fought with the Stone Age aboriginals, the lizard-evolved Ais. Their great victories at Satan's Pass, Squareface, Albertsville and Double Tongue, and their defeats at Slow River and Blue Falls were already a part of human history, fit to stand beside Chancellorsville, the Little Big Horn, and Dienbienphu.

And the wars were not over yet. On Venus, the driver told them, a world was still to be won.

Crompton listened, thought he might like to be a part of all this. Loomis was frankly bored by the whole matter and disgusted with the rank swamp odors.

OU-BARKAR was a cluster of plantations deep in the interior of White Cloud Continent. Twenty Whole men supervised the work of five hundred Splitters and two thousand aboriginals, who planted, tended and harvested the li-trees that grew only in that sector. The li fruit, gathered twice a year, was the basis of elispice, a condiment now considered indispensable in Terran cooking.

Crompton met the foreman, a huge, red-faced man named Haaris, who wore a revolver on his hip and a blacksnake whip coiled neatly around his waist.

"Dan Stack?" the foreman said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sure, Stack worked here. He left with a boot in the rear to help him on his way."

"Do you mind telling me why?" Crompton asked.

"Don't mind at all," the foreman said. "But let's do it over a drink."

He led Crompton to Ou-Barkar's single saloon. There, over a glass of local cactus whiskey, Haaris talked about Dan Stack.

"He came up here from East Marsh. I believe he'd had some trouble with a girl down there — kicked in her teeth or something. But that's no concern of mine. Most of us here are Splitters, and we aren't exactly gentle types. I guess the cities are damned well rid of us. I put Stack to work overseeing fifty Ais on a hundred-acre li field. He did damned well at first."

The foreman downed his drink. Crompton ordered another and paid for it.

"I told him," Haaris said, "that he'd have to drive his boys to get anything out of them. We use mostly Chipetzi tribesmen, and they're a sullen, treacherous bunch, though husky. Their chief rents us workers on a twenty-year contract, in exchange for guns. Then they try to pick us off with the guns, but that's another matter. We handle one thing at a time."

"A twenty-year contract?" Crompton echoed. "Then the Ais are practically slave laborers."

"Right," the foreman said decisively. "Some of the owners try to pretty it up, call it temporary indenture or feudal-transition economy. But it's slavery, and why not call it that? It's the only way we'll ever civilize these creatures. Stack understood that. Big hefty fellow he was, and handy with a whip. I thought he'd do all right."

CROMPTON ordered another drink for the foreman. "And?" he prompted.

"At first he was fine," Haaris said. "Laid on with the blacksnake, got out his quota and then some. But he hadn't any sense of moderation. Started killing his natives with the whip, and replacements cost money. I told him to take it a little easier. He didn't. One day his Chipetzis ganged up on him and he had to gun down about eight before they backed off. I had a heart-to-heart talk with him. Told him the idea was to get *work* out, not kill Ais. We expect to lose a certain percentage, of course. But Stack was pushing it too far and cutting down the profit."

The foreman spat and lighted a cigarette. "Stack just liked using that whip too much. Lots of the idboys do, but Stack had no sense of moderation. His Chipetzis ganged up again and he had to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kill about a dozen of them. But he lost a hand in the fight. His whip hand. I think a Chipetzi chewed it off.

"I put him to work in the drying sheds, but he got into another fight and killed four Ais. Well, that was just too much. Those workers cost money and we can't have some hot-headed idiot killing them off every time he gets sore. I gave Stack his pay and told him to get the hell out."

"Did he say where he was going?" Crompton asked.

"He said we didn't realize that the Ais had to be wiped out to make room for Terrans. Said he was going to join the Vigilantes. They're a sort of roving army that keeps the unpacified tribes in check."

Crompton thanked the foreman and inquired for the location of the Vigilantes' headquarters.

"Right now they're encamped on the left bank of the Rainmaker River," Haaris said. "They're trying to make terms with the Seriid. You want to find Stack pretty bad, huh?"

"I have to find him," Crompton said.

Haaris looked at the briefcase in Crompton's hand and shrugged fatalistically. "It's a long trek to Rainmaker River. I can sell you pack mules and provisions, and I'll rent you a native youngster for a guide. You'll be going through pacified territory, so you should reach the Vigilantes all right. I *think* the territory's still pacified."

LOOMIS, that night, urged Crompton to abandon the search. Stack was obviously a thief and murderer. What was the sense of taking him into the combination?

Crompton felt that the case wasn't as simple as that. For one thing, the stories about Stack might have been exaggerated. But even if they were true, it simply meant that Stack was an inadequate monolithic personality extended past all normal bounds, as were Crompton and Loomis. Within the combination, in fusion, the id would be modified. Stack would supply the necessary measure of aggression, the toughness and survival fitness that both Crompton and Loomis lacked.

Loomis didn't think so, but agreed to suspend judgment until they actually met their missing component.

In the morning, Crompton purchased equipment and mules at an exorbitant price, and the following day he set out at dawn, led by a Chipetzi youngster named Rekki.

Crompton jogged after the guide through virgin forest into the Thompson Mountains, up razorback ridges, across cloud-covered peaks into narrow granite

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

passes where the wind screamed like the tormented dead, then down into the dense and steamy jungle on the other side.

Loomis, appalled by the hardships of the march, retreated into a corner of the mind and emerged only in the evenings when the campfire was lit and the hammock slung.

Crompton, with set jaw and bloodshot eyes, stumbled through the burning days, bearing the full sensory impact of the journey and wondering how long his strength would last.

On the eighteenth day, they reached the banks of a shallow muddy stream. This, Rekki said, was the Rainmaker River. Two miles farther on, they found the Vigilante camp.

The Vigilante commander, Colonel Prentice, was a tall, spare, gray-eyed man who showed the marks of a recent wasting fever. He remembered Stack very well.

"Yes, he was with us for a while. I was uncertain about accepting him. His reputation, for one thing. And a one-handed man . . . But he'd trained his left hand to fire a gun better than most do with their right, and he had a bronze fitting over his right stump. Made it himself and it was grooved to hold a machete. No lack of guts, I'll tell you that. But I had to cashier him."

"Why?" Crompton asked.

THE commander sighed unhappily. "Contrary to popular belief, we Vigilantes are not a free-booting army of conquest. We are not here to decimate and destroy the natives. Nor are we here to annex new territories upon the slightest pretext. We *are* here to enforce treaties entered into in good faith by Ais and settlers, to prevent raiding by Ais and Terrans alike, and, in general, to keep the peace. Stack had difficulty getting that through his thick skull."

Some expression must have passed across Crompton's face, for the commander nodded sympathetically.

"You know what a really rampant id is like, eh? Then you can imagine what happened. I didn't want to lose him. He was a tough and able soldier, skilled in forest and mountain lore, perfectly at home in the jungle. The Border Patrol is thinly spread and we need every man we can get, Whole or Split. Stack was valuable. I told the sergeants to keep him in line and allow no brutalizing of the natives. For a while, it worked. Stack was trying hard. He was learning our rules, our code, our way of doing things. His record was unimpeachable. Then came the Shadow Peak incident, which I suppose you've heard about."

"I'm afraid I haven't," Crompton said.

"Really? I thought everyone on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Venus had. Well, the situation was this. Stack's patrol had rounded up nearly a hundred Ais of an outlaw tribe that had been causing us some trouble. They were being conducted to the special reservation at Shadow Peak. On the march, there was a little trouble, a scuffle. One of the Ais had a knife and he slashed Stack across the right wrist.

"I suppose losing one hand made Stack especially sensitive to the possible loss of another. The wound was superficial, but he berserked. He killed the native with a riot gun, then turned it on the rest of them. A lieutenant had to bludgeon him into unconsciousness before he could be stopped. The damage to Terran-Ais relations was immeasurable. I couldn't have a man like that in my outfit, so, as I said, I cashiered him."

"Where is he now?" asked Crompton.

"I heard he drifted to Port New Haarlem and worked for a while on the docks. He teamed up with a chap named Barton Finch. Both were jailed for drunk and disorderly conduct, got out and drifted back to the White Cloud frontier. Now he and Finch own a little trading store up near Blood Delta."

Crompton rubbed his forehead wearily and said, "How do I get there?"

"By canoe," the commander said. "You go down the Rainmaker River to where it forks. The left-hand stream is Blood River. It's navigable all the way to Blood Delta. But I would not advise the trip. For one thing, it's extremely hazardous. For another, it would be useless. You want to reintegrate him? Don't try. He's a bred-in-the-bone killer. He's better off alone on the frontier, where he can't do much damage."

"I must reintegrate," Crompton said, his throat suddenly dry.

"There's no law against it," said the commander, with the air of a man who has done his duty.

CROMPTON found that Blood Delta was Man's farthest frontier on Venus. It lay in the midst of hostile Grel and Tengtzi tribesmen, with whom a precarious peace was maintained, and an incessant guerrilla war was ignored.

There was great wealth to be gained in the Delta country. The natives brought in fist-sized diamonds and rubies, sacks of the rarest spices, and an occasional flute or carving from the lost city of Alteirne. They traded these things for guns and ammunition, which they used enthusiastically on the traders and on each other. There was wealth to be found in the Delta, and sudden death, and slow, painful, lingering death as well. The Blood River, which wound slowly into the heart of the Delta country, had its own special

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hazards, which usually took a fifty per cent toll of travelers upon it.

Crompton resolutely shut his mind to all common sense. His component, Stack, lay just ahead of him. The end was in sight and Crompton was determined to reach it. So he bought a canoe and hired four native paddlers, purchased supplies, guns, ammunition, and arranged for a dawn departure.

But the night before he planned to go, Loomis revolted.

They were in a small tent which the commander had put aside for Crompton's use. By a smoking kerosene lamp, Crompton was stuffing cartridges into a bandolier, his attention fixed on the immediate task and unwilling to look elsewhere.

Loomis said, "Now listen to me. I've recognized you as the dominant personality. I've made no attempt to take over the body. I've been in good spirits and I've kept *you* in good spirits while we tramped halfway around Venus. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, it is," Crompton said, reluctantly putting down the bandolier.

"I've done the best I could, but this isn't fun any longer. I want reintegration, but not with a homicidal maniac. Don't talk to me about monolithic personalities. Stack's *homicidal* and I want nothing to do with him."

"He's a part of us," said Crompton.

LOOMIS said, "Just listen to yourself, Crompton! You're supposed to be the component most in touch with reality. And you're completely obsessed, planning on sending us into sure death."

"We'll get through all right," Crompton said, with more certainty than he felt.

"Will we?" Loomis asked. "Have you listened to the stories about Blood River? And even if we do make it, what will we find at the Delta? A homicidal maniac! He'll shatter us, Crompton!"

Crompton was unable to find an adequate answer. As their search had progressed, he had grown more and more horrified at the unfolding personality of Stack, and more and more obsessed with the need to find him. Loomis had never lived with the driving need for reintegration; he had come in because of external problems, not internal needs. But Crompton had been compelled by the passion for humanness, completion, roundedness. Without Stack, fusion was impossible. With him, there was a chance.

"We're going on," Crompton said.

"Alistair, please! You and I get along all right. We can do fine without Stack. Let's go back to Mars or Earth."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crompton shook his head. He had already felt the deep and irreconcilable rifts occurring between him and Loomis. He could sense the time when those rifts would extend to all areas, and, without reintegration, they would have to go their separate ways — in one body.

Which would be madness.

"You won't go back?" Loomis persisted.

"No."

"Then I'm taking over!"

Loomis' personality surged in a surprise attack and seized partial control of the body's motor functions. Crompton was stunned for a moment. Then, as he felt control slipping away from him, he grimly closed with Loomis, and the battle was begun.

It was a silent war, fought by the light of a smoking kerosene lamp that grew gradually dimmer toward dawn. The battleground was the Crompton mind. The prize was the Crompton body, which lay shivering on a canvas cot, perspiration pouring from its forehead, eyes staring blankly at the light, a nerve in its forehead twitching steadily.

Crompton was the dominant personality, but he was weakened by conflict and guilt, and hampered by his own scruples. Loomis, weaker but single-minded, certain of his course, totally committed to the struggle, managed to hold the vital motor functions and block the flow of antidols.

FOR hours, the two personalities were locked in combat, while the feverish Crompton body moaned and writhed on the cot. At last, in the gray hours of the morning, Loomis began to gain ground. Crompton gathered himself for a final effort, but couldn't bring himself to make it. The Crompton body was already dangerously overheated by the fight; a little more, and neither personality would have a corpus to inhabit.

Loomis, with no scruples to hold him back, continued to press forward, seized vital synapses and took over all motor functions.

By sunrise, he had won a total victory.

Shakily, Loomis got to his feet. He touched the stubble on his chin, rubbed his numbed fingertips, and looked around. It was *his* body now. For the first time since Mars, he was seeing and feeling directly, instead of having all sensory information filtered and relayed to him through the Crompton personality. It felt good to breathe the stagnant air, to feel cloth against his body, to be hungry, to be *alive!* He had emerged from a gray shadow world into a land of brilliant colors. Wonderful! He wanted to keep it just like this.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poor Crompton . . .

"Don't worry, old man," Loomis said. "You know, I'm doing this for your good also."

There was no answer from Crompton.

"We'll go back to Mars," Loomis informed him. "Back to Elderberg. Things will work out."

Crompton did not, or could not, answer. Loomis became mildly alarmed.

"Are you there, Crompton? Are you all right?"

No answer.

Loomis frowned, then hurried outside to the commander's tent.

"I'VE changed my mind about finding Dan Stack," Loomis told the commander. "He really sounds too far gone."

"I think you've made a wise decision," the commander said.

"So I should like to return to Mars immediately."

The commander nodded. "All spaceships leave from Port New Haarlem, where you came in."

"How do I get back there?"

"Well, that's a little difficult," the commander replied. "I suppose I could lend you a native guide. You'll have to trek back across the Thompson Mountains to Ou-Barkar. I suggest you take the Desset Valley route this time, since the Kmikti Horde is migrating across the central rain-forest, and you can never tell about those devils. You'll reach Ou-Barkar in the rainy season, so the semis won't be going through to Depotsville. You might be able to join the salt caravan traveling the short way through Knife Pass, if you get there in time. If you don't, the trail is relatively easy to follow by compass, if you compensate for the variation zones.

"Once you've reached Depotsville, the rains will be in full career. Quite a sight, too. Perhaps you can catch a heli to New St. Denis and another to East Marsh, but I doubt it because of the *zicre*. Winds like that can mess up aircraft rather badly. So perhaps you could take the paddleboat to East Marsh, then a freighter down the Inland Zee to Port New Haarlem. I believe there are several good hurricane ports along the southern shore, in case the weather grows extreme. I personally prefer to travel by land or air. The final decision of route, of course, rests with you."

"Thank you," said Loomis faintly.

"Let me know what you decide," the commander said.

Loomis thanked him and returned to his tent in a state of nerves. He thought about the trip back across mountains and swamps, through primitive settlements, past migrating hordes. He visualized the complications added by the rains and the *zicre*. Never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

performed any better than it did now, conjuring up the horrors of that trip back.

It had been hard getting here; it would be much harder returning. And this time, his sensitive and pleasure-seeking soul would not be sheltered by the patient, long-suffering Crompton. *He* would have to bear the full sensory impact of wind, rain, hunger, thirst, exhaustion and fear. *He* would have to eat the coarse foods and drink the foul water. And *he* would have to perform the complicated routines of the trail, which Crompton had painfully learned and which he had ignored.

THE total responsibility would be his. He would have to choose the route and make the critical decisions, for Crompton's life and for his own.

But could he? He was a man of the cities, a creature of society. His problems had been the quirks and twists of people, not the moods and passions of nature. He had avoided the raw and lumpy world of sun and sky, living entirely in mankind's elaborate burrows and intricate anthills. Protected by sidewalks, doors, windows and ceilings, he had come to doubt the strength of nature about which the older authors wrote so engagingly, and which furnished such excellent conceits for poems and songs.

Loomis, sun-bathing on a placid Martian summer day or drowsily listening to the whistle of wind against his window on a stormy night, had — in the interest of art, to be sure — been exaggerated into a gigantic and wholly imaginary grinding machine.

But now, shatteringly, he had to ride the wheels of the grindstone.

Loomis thought about it and suddenly pictured his own end. He saw the time when his energies would be exhausted and he would be lying in some windswept pass or sitting with bowed head in the driving rain of the marshlands. He would try to go on, searching for the strength that is said to lie beyond exhaustion. And he would not find it. A sense of utter futility would pass over him, alone and lost in the immensity of all outdoors. At that point, life would seem too much effort, too much strain. He, like many before him, would then admit defeat, give up, lie down, and wait for death . . .

Loomis whispered, "Crompton?"

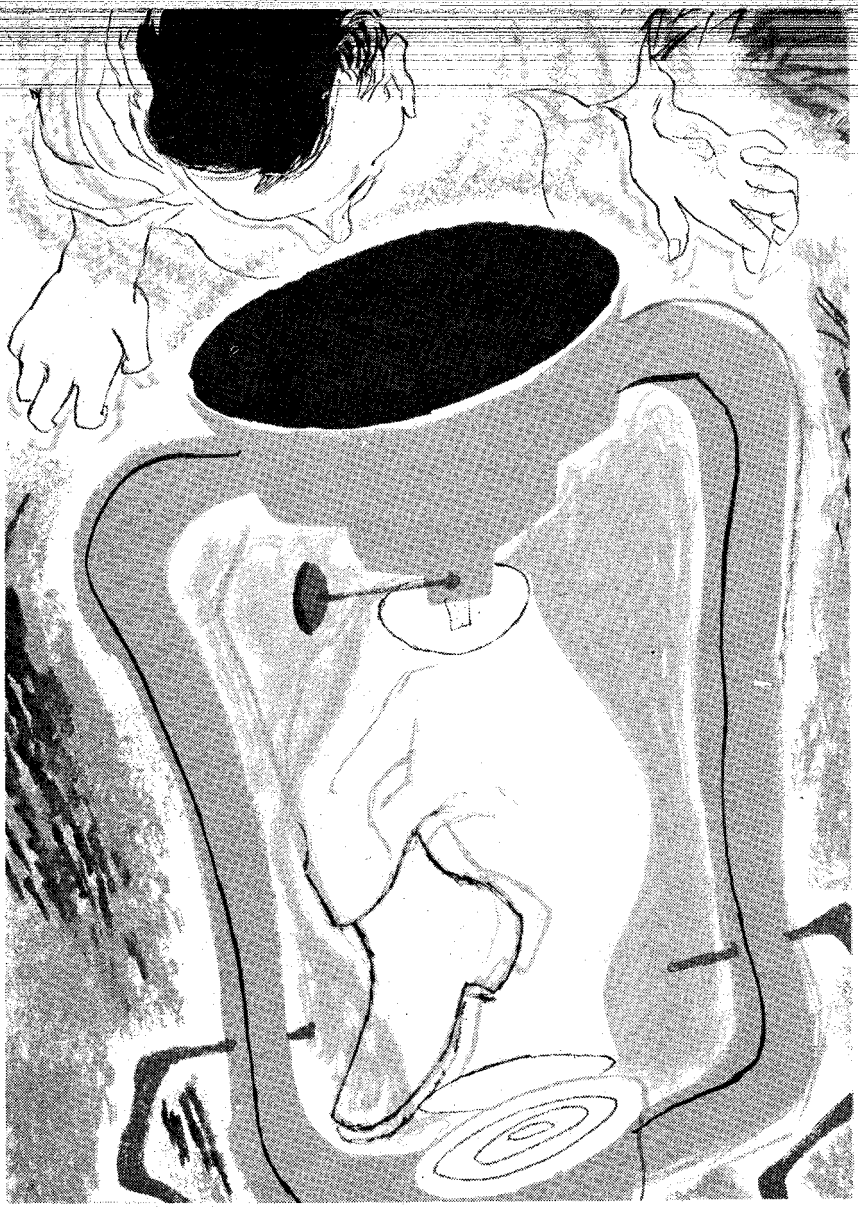
No answer.

"Crompton! Can't you hear me? I'll put you back in command. Just get us out of this overgrown greenhouse. Get us back to Earth or Mars! Crompton, I don't want to die!"

Still no answer.

"All right, Crompton," Loomis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said in a husky whisper. "You win. Take over! Do anything you want. I surrender — it's all yours. Just please *take over!*"

"Thank you," Crompton said icily, and took control of the Crompton body.

In ten minutes, he was back in the commander's tent, saying that he had changed his mind again. The commander nodded wearily, deciding that he would never understand people.

SOON Crompton was seated in the center of a large dugout canoe, with trade goods piled around him. The paddlers set up a lusty chant and pushed onto the river. Crompton turned and watched until the Vigilantes' tents were lost around a bend.

To Crompton, that trip down the Blood River was like a passage to the beginning of time. The six natives dipped their paddles in silent unison and the canoe glided like a water-spider over the broad, slow-moving stream. Gigantic ferns hung over the river's bank, and quivered when the canoe came near, and stretched longingly toward them on long stalks. Then the paddlers would raise the warning shout and the canoe would be steered back to midstream, and the ferns would droop again in the noonday heat.

They came to places where the trees had interlaced overhead, forming a dark, leafy tunnel. Then Crompton and the paddlers would crouch under the canvas of the tent, letting the boat drift through on the current, hearing the lethal splatter of corrosive sap dropping around them. They would emerge again to the glaring white sky, and the natives would man their paddles.

"Ominous," Loomis said nervously.

"Yes, quite ominous," Crompton agreed, awed by his surroundings.

The Blood River carried them deep into the interior of the continent. At night, moored to a midstream boulder, they could hear the war-hums of hostile Ais. One day, two canoes of Ais pulled into the stream behind them. Crompton's men leaned into their paddles and the canoe sprinted forward. The hostiles clung doggedly to them, and Crompton took out a rifle and waited. But his paddlers, inspired by fear, increased their lead, and soon the raiders were lost at a fork in the river.

They breathed more easily after that. But at a narrow stretch they were greeted by a shower of arrows from both banks. One of the paddlers slumped across the gunwhale, pierced four times. The rest leaned to their paddles and soon were out of range.

They dropped the dead Ais overboard, and the hungry creatures of the river squabbled over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his disposition. After that, a great armored creature with crablike arms swam behind the canoe, his round head raised above the water, waiting doggedly for more food. Even rifle bullets wouldn't drive him away, and his presence gave Crompton nightmares.

THE creature received another meal when two paddlers died of a grayish mold that crept up their paddles. The crablike creature accepted them and waited for more. But this river god protected his own — a raiding party of hostiles, seeing him, raised a great shout and fled back into the jungle.

He clung behind the canoe for the final hundred miles of the journey. And, when they came at last to a moss-covered wharf on the bank, he stopped, watched disconsolately for a while, then turned back upstream.

The paddlers pulled to the ruined dock. Crompton climbed onto it and saw a piece of wood daubed with red paint. Turning it over he saw written on it, "Blood Delta. Population 92."

Nothing but jungle lay beyond. They had reached Dan Stack's final retreat.

A narrow, overgrown path led from the wharf to a clearing in the jungle. Within the clearing was what looked like a ghost town. Not a person walked on its single dusty street and no faces peered out of the low, unpainted buildings. The little town baked silently under the white noonday glare, and Crompton could hear no sound but the scuffle of his own footsteps in the dirt.

"I don't like this," Loomis said.

Crompton walked slowly down the street. He passed a row of storage sheds with their owners' names crudely printed across the walls. He passed an empty saloon, its door hanging by one hinge, its mosquito-netting windows ripped. He went by three deserted stores and came to a fourth which had a sign saying, "Stack & Finch. Supplies."

Crompton entered. Trade goods were in neat piles on the floor, and more goods hung from the ceiling rafters. There was no one inside.

"Anyone here?" Crompton called. He got no answer.

At the end of the town, he came to a sturdy, barnlike building. Sitting on a stool in front of it was a tanned and mustached man of perhaps fifty. He had a revolver thrust into his belt. His stool was tilted back against the wall and he appeared to be half asleep.

"Dan Stack?" Crompton asked.

"Inside," the man grunted.

CROMPTON walked to the door. The mustached man stirred and the revolver was suddenly in his hand.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Move back away from that door," he ordered.

"Why? What's wrong?"

"You mean you don't know?" asked the mustached man.

"No! Who are you?"

"I'm Ed Tyler, peace officer appointed by the citizens of Blood Delta and confirmed in office by the commander of the Vigilantes. Stack's in jail. This here place is the jail, for the time being."

"How long is he in for?"

"Just a couple hours," said Tyler.

"Can I speak to him?"

"Nope."

"Can I speak to him when he gets out?"

"Sure," Tyler said, "but I doubt he'll answer you."

"Why?"

The peace officer grinned wryly. "Stack will just be in jail a couple hours on account of this afternoon we're taking him *out* of the jail and hanging him by the neck until he's dead. After we've performed that little chore, you're welcome to all the talking you want with him. But like I said, I doubt he'll answer you."

Crompton was too tired to feel much shock. He asked, "What did Stack do?"

"Murder."

"A native?"

"Hell, no," Tyler said in disgust. "Who gives a damn about natives? Stack killed a *man* name of Barton Finch. His own partner. Finch isn't dead yet, but he's going fast. Old Doc says he won't last out the day, and that makes it murder. Stack was tried by a jury of his peers and found guilty of killing Barton Finch, breaking Billy Redburn's leg, busting two of Eli Talbot's ribs, wrecking Moriarty's saloon, and generally disturbing the peace. The judge — that's me — prescribed hanging by the neck as soon as possible. That means this afternoon, when the boys are back from working on the new dam."

"When did the trial take place?" Crompton asked.

"This morning."

"And the murder?"

"About three hours before the trial."

"Quick work," Crompton said.

"We don't waste no time here in Blood Delta," said Tyler proudly.

"I guess you don't. You even hang a man before his victim's dead."

"I told you Finch is going fast," Tyler said, his eyes narrowing. "Watch yourself, stranger. Don't go around maligning the justice of Blood Delta, or you'll find yourself in plenty trouble. We don't need no fancy lawyer's tricks to tell us right from wrong."

LOOMIS whispered urgently to Crompton, "Leave it alone. Let's get out of here."

Crompton ignored him. He said

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the sheriff, "Mr. Tyler, I'd really appreciate seeing him. Just for five minutes. Just to give him a last message."

"Not a chance," the sheriff said.

Crompton dug into his pocket and took out a grimy wad of bills. "Just two minutes."

"Well. Maybe I could — *damn!*"

Following Tyler's gaze, Crompton saw a large group of men coming down the dusty street.

"Here come the boys," Tyler said. "Not a chance now, even if I wanted to. I guess you can watch the hanging, though."

Crompton moved back out of the way. There were at least fifty men in the group, and more coming. For the most part, they were lean, leathery, hard-bitten, no-nonsense types, and most of them carried sidearms. They conferred briefly with the sheriff.

"Don't do anything stupid," Loomis warned.

"There's nothing I *can* do," Crompton said.

Sheriff Tyler opened the barn door. A group of men entered and came out dragging a man. Crompton was unable to see what he looked like, for the crowd closed around him.

He followed as they hustled the man to the far edge of town, where a rope had been thrown across one limb of a sturdy tree.

"Up with him!" the crowd shouted.

"Boys!" came the muffled voice of Dan Stack. "Let me speak!"

"To hell with that," a man yelled. "Up with him!"

"My last words!" Stack shrieked.

The sheriff called out, "Let him say his piece, boys. It's a dying man's right. Go ahead, Stack, but don't take too long about it."

THEY had put Dan Stack on a wagon, the noose around his neck, the free end held by a dozen hands. At last Crompton was able to see him. He stared, fascinated by this long-sought-for segment of himself.

Dan Stack was a large, solidly built man. His thick, deeply lined features showed the marks of passion and hatred, fear and sudden violence. He had wide, flaring nostrils, a thick-lipped mouth set with strong teeth, and narrow, treacherous eyes. Coarse black hair hung over his inflamed forehead, and there was a dark stubble on his fiery cheeks.

Stack was staring overhead at the glowing white sky. Slowly he lowered his head, and the bronze fixture on his right hand flashed red in the steady glare.

"Boys," Stack said, "I've done a lot of bad things in my time."

"You telling *us*?" someone shouted.

"I've been a liar and a cheat. I've struck the girl I loved and struck her hard, wanting to hurt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I've stolen from my own dear parents. I've brought red murder to the unhappy natives of this planet. Boys, I've not lived a good life!"

The crowd laughed at his maudlin speech.

"But I want you to know," Stack bellowed, "I want you to know that I've struggled with my sinful nature and tried to conquer it. I've wrestled with the old devil in my soul and fought him the best fight I knew how. I joined the Vigilantes and for a while I was as straight a man as you'll find. Then the madness came over me again and I killed."

"You through now?" the sheriff asked.

"But I want you all to understand one thing," Stack bawled, his eyeballs rolling in his red face. "I admit the bad things I've done. I admit them freely and fully. But, boys, *I did not kill Barton Finch!*"

"All right," the sheriff said. "If you're through now, we'll get on with it."

"Listen to me! Finch was my friend, my only friend on this world! I was trying to help him and I shook him a little to bring him to his senses. And when he didn't, I guess I lost my head and busted up Moriarty's Saloon and fractured a couple of the boys. But I swear I didn't harm Finch!"

"Are you finished?" the sheriff patiently wanted to know.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stack opened his mouth, closed it again, and nodded.

"All right, boys," the sheriff said. "Let's go."

ALTHOUGH the crowd roared agreement, no one stepped forward to move the wagon upon which Stack was standing. They were hard men, skilled in native warfare, always ready for a fight. But hanging a man in cold blood was something else again.

"Well?" the sheriff asked. "How about it?"

No one moved.

"Okay," said Sheriff Tyler mournfully. "Guess I'll have to do it myself, though I wish — "

"Wait!" Crompton shouted. "I've got a score to settle with Stack! I'll do it myself!"

No one stopped him as he jumped on the wagon. Standing close to Stack, concealing his movements from the crowd, Crompton pulled the projector out of its case. Stack knew at once who he was. Quickly they slapped on the electrodes.

"Hey!" yelled a man in the crowd. "What's he doing?"

And Loomis was speaking very quickly. "Watch out, take it easy, don't do it, don't believe him, remember his history, he'll ruin us, smash us, he's powerful, he's homicidal, he's evil."

But Stack was part of Crompton, couldn't be completely evil.

But had Stack told the truth? Or had that impassioned speech been a last-minute bid to the audience in hope of a reprieve?

Crompton had no time to think. Hastily he set up a similarity-pattern and shoved the switch. Then he yanked the projector free and stuffed it inside his shirt.

"Get him away from there!" the sheriff shouted.

Crompton was yanked from the wagon and a dozen men gave it a push. The crowd roared as Stack's body plunged from the edge, contorted horribly for a moment, then hung lifeless from the taut rope. And Crompton caved in under the impact of Stack's mind in his.

CROMPTON awoke to find himself lying on a cot in a small, dimly lighted room.

"You all right?" a voice asked.

After a moment, Crompton recognized Sheriff Tyler bending over him.

"Yes, fine now," Crompton said automatically.

"I guess a hanging's something of a shock to a civilized man like yourself. Think you'll be okay if I leave you alone?"

"Certainly," Crompton answered dully.

"Good. Got some work to do. I'll look in on you in a couple hours."

Tyler left. Crompton tried to take stock of himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Integration . . .

Fusion . . .

Completion . . .

Had he achieved it during the healing time of unconsciousness? Tentatively he searched his mind.

He found Loomis wailing disconsolately, terribly frightened, babbling about the Orange Desert, camping trips at All Diamond Mountain, the pleasures of women, luxury, sensation, beauty.

And Stack was there, solid and immovable, unfused.

Crompton spoke to him, mind to mind, and knew that Stack had been absolutely and completely sincere in his last speech. Stack honestly wished for reform, self-control, moderation.

And Crompton also knew that Stack was completely and absolutely *unable* to reform, to exercise self-control, to practice moderation.

Even now, in spite of his efforts, Stack was filled with a passionate desire for revenge. His mind rumbled furiously, a deep counterpoint to Loomis' shrill babbling. Great dreams of revenge swam in his mind, gaudy plans to conquer all Venus. Do something about the damned natives, wipe them out, make room for Terrans. Rip that damned Tyler limb from limb. Machine-gun the whole town, pretend the natives had done it. Build up a body of dedicated men, a private army of worshipers of STACK, maintain it with iron discipline, no weakness, no hesitation. Cut down the Vigilantes and no one would stand in the way of conquest, murder, revenge, fury, terror!

Struck from both sides, Crompton tried to maintain balance, to extend his control over libido and id. He fought to fuse the components into a single entity, a stable whole. But the minds struck back, refusing to yield their autonomy.

The lines of cleavage deepened, new and irreconcilable schisms appeared, and Crompton felt his own stability undermined and his sanity threatened.

DAN Stack, with his baffled and unworkable reforming urge, had a moment of lucidity.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Can't help. You need the other."

"What other?" asked Crompton in bewilderment.

"I tried to reform! But there was too much of me, too much conflict, hot and cold, on and off. Thought I could cure it myself. So I Split."

"You *what*?"

"Can't you hear me?" Stack moaned. "Me, I Split. When I went back to Port New Haarlem, I got another Durier chassis, stole a projector and Split. I thought everything would be easier. But I was wrong!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"There's *another* of us?" Crompton cried. "That's why we can't reintegrate! Who is it? Where is he?"

"We were like brothers, him and me! I thought I could learn from him, he was so quiet and good and patient and calm! I *was* learning! Then he started to give up."

"Who was it?" Crompton pursued.

"So I tried to help him, tried to shake him out of it. But he was failing fast; he just didn't care to live. My last chance was gone and I went a little crazy and shook him and broke up Moriarty's Saloon. But I didn't kill Barton Finch! He just didn't want to live!"

"*Finch* is the last component?"

"Yes! You must go to Finch before he lets himself die, and you must reintegrate him. He's in the little room in back of the store. You'll have to hurry . . ."

Stack fell back into his dreams of red murder, while Loomis babbled about the blue Xanadu Caverns.

Crompton lifted the Crompton body from the cot and dragged it to the door. Down the street, he could see Stack's store. *Reach the store,* he told himself, and staggered out into the street.

HE walked a million miles. He crawled for a thousand years, up mountains, across rivers, past deserts, through swamps, down caverns that led to the center of the world and out again to immeasurable oceans, which he swam to their farthest shore. And at the long journey's end, he came to Stack's store.

In the back room, lying on a couch with a blanket pulled up to his chin, was Finch, the last hope for reintegration. Looking at him, Crompton knew the final hopelessness of his search.

Finch lay very quietly, his eyes open and unfocused and unreachable, staring at nothing. His face was the great, white, expressionless face of an idiot. Those placid Buddha features showed an inhuman calm, expecting nothing and wanting nothing.

Crompton crawled to the bedside. With infinite weariness, he took the projector from his shirt and fastened the electrodes to Finch's head and to his own. He set the controls and threw the switch.

Nothing happened. Finch was too far gone to respond.

Crompton felt his tired, overstrained body slump by the idiot's bedside.

Finch was bound to die; reintegration would never be achieved. There was nothing Crompton could do about it.

Then Stack, with his despairing reformer's zeal, emerged from his dream of revenge. Together with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crompton, he willed the idiot to look and see. And Loomis searched for and found the strength beyond exhaustion, and joined them in the effort.

Three together, they stared at the idiot. And Finch, evoked by three-quarters of himself, parts calling irresistibly for the whole, made a rally. A brief expression flickered in his eyes. He *recognized.*

Crompton closed the switch again.

And Finch entered.

Reintegration at last! But what was this? What was happening? What force was taking over now, driving everything remorselessly before it?

Crompton shrieked, tried to rip his throat open with his fingernails, nearly succeeded, and collapsed on the floor near the dead chassis of Finch.

WHEN the body opened its eyes again, it yawned and stretched copiously, enjoying the sensation of air and light and color, content with itself and thinking that there was work for it to do, and love to be found, and a whole life to be lived.

The body, former possession of Alistair Crompton, Edgar Loomis, Dan Stack and Barton Finch, stood up. The amalgam of separately evolved super-ego, libido and split id had, under extreme stress, produced a new ego — and therefore a new man.

He walked to the door, realizing that he would have to think up a new name for himself.

— FINN O'DONNEVAN

FORECAST

If you've read the editorial this month, you know the next issue — dated February, remember, NOT January — is the first giant new 196-page *Galaxy*, the biggest, most lavish reading bargain in science fiction today. More stories, more pages, more features, what a lineup!

For instance, Robert Sheckley's brilliant TIME KILLER concludes in that issue, in a flare of scintillating action. Far from clearing the slate, dying has only doubled Blaine's troubles — and now these people want him to die again to square himself!

And a full-length novella, INSTALLMENT PLAN by Clifford D. Simak, with a crew better equipped than any to skin cats in ingenious ways — on a planet better equipped than any to give them a merciless hiding!

At least two novelets, one of which will be INSIDEKICK by J. F. Bone; plus a hefty cargo of short stories, plus our regular features, and MONSTERS OF THE DEEP by Willy Ley, who dives miles straight down to the bottom of the ocean to show you the inconceivable monstrousnesses that share this world with you!

Look for the new great giant 196-page *Galaxy* on sale the 1st week in December!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oddest thing happened to me on my way through darkest Africa: I saw clearly beyond this . . .

NIGHTMARE WITH ZEPPELINS

By FREDERIK POHL
and C. M. KORNBLUTH

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

THE Zeppelin dirigible balloons bombed London again last night and I got little sleep what with the fire brigades clanging down the street and the anti-aircraft guns banging away. Bad news in the morning post. A plain card from Emmie to let me know that Sam's gone, fast and without much pain. She didn't say, but I suppose it was the flu, which makes him at least the fifth of the old lib-lab boys taken off this winter. And why not? We're in our seventies and eighties. It's high time.

Shaw said as much the other day when I met him on the steps of the Museum reading room, he striding in, I doddering out. In that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brutal, flippant way of his, he was rather funny about how old Harry Lewes was standing in the way of youngsters like himself, but I can't bring myself to put his remarks down; they would be a little too painful to contemplate.

Well, he's quite recovered from that business with his foot that gave us all such a fright. Barring the 'flu, he may live to my age, and about 1939 bright youngsters now unborn will be watching him like hawks for the smallest sign of rigidity, of eccentricity, and saying complacently: "Grand old boy, G.B.S. Such a pity he's going the least bit soft upstairs." And I shall by then be watching from Olympus, and chuckling.

Enough of him. He has the most extraordinary way of getting into everybody's conversation, though it is true that my own conversation does wander, these bad days. I did not think that the second decade of the twentieth century would be like this, though, as I have excellent reason to be, I am glad it is not worse.

I AM really quite unhappy and uncomfortable as I sit here at the old desk. Though all the world knows I don't hold with personal service for the young and healthy, I am no longer a member of either of those classes. I do miss the ministrations of Bagley, who at this moment is probably lying in a frozen trench and even more uncomfortable than I. I can't seem to build as warm a fire as he used to. The coals won't go right. Luckily, I know what to do when I am unhappy and uncomfortable: work.

Anyway, Wells is back from France. He has been talking, he says, to some people at the Cavendish Laboratory, wherever that is. He told me we must make a "radium bomb." I wanted to ask: "Must we, Wells? Must we, *really?*"

He says the great virtue of a radium bomb is that it explodes *and keeps on exploding*—for hours, days, weeks. The italics are Wells's —one could hear them in his rather high-pitched voice – and he is welcome to them.

I once saw an explosion which would have interested Wells and, although it did not *keep on exploding*, it was as much of an explosion as I ever care to see.

I thought of telling him so. But, if he believed me, there would be a hue and a cry – I wonder, was I ever once as *consecrated* as he? – and if he did not, he might all the same use it for the subject of one of his "scientific" romances. After I am gone, of course, but surely that event cannot be long delayed, and in any case that would spoil it. And I want the work. I do not think I have another book remaining – forty-one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fat volumes will have to do — but this can hardly be a book.

A short essay; it must be short if it is not to become an autobiography and, though I have resisted few temptations in my life, I mean to fight that one off to the end. That was another jeer of Shaw's. Well, he scored off me, for I confess that some such thought had stirred in my mind.

MY lifelong struggle with voice and pen against social injustice had barely begun in 1864, and yet I had played a part in three major work stoppages, published perhaps a dozen pamphlets and was the editor and principal contributor of the still-remembered *Labour's Voice*. I write with what must look like immodesty only to explain how it was that I came to the attention of Miss Carlotta Cox. I was working with the furious energy of a very young man who has discovered his vocation, and no doubt Miss Cox mistook my daemon — now long gone, alas! — for me.

Miss Cox was a member of that considerable group of ruling-class Englishmen and women who devote time, thought and money to improving the lot of the workingman. Everybody knows of good Josiah Wedgewood, Mr. William Morris, Miss Nightingale; they were the great ones. Perhaps I alone today remember Miss Cox, but there were hundreds like her and pray God there will always be.

She was then a spinster in her sixties and had spent most of her life giving away her fortune. She had gone once in her youth to the cotton mills whence that fortune had come, and knew after her first horrified look what her course must be. She instructed her man of business to sell all her shares in that Inferno of sweated labour and for the next forty years, as she always put it, attempted to make restitution.

She summoned me, in short, to her then-celebrated stationer's shop and, between waiting on purchasers of nibs and foolscap, told me her plan. I was to go to Africa.

ACROSS the Atlantic, America was at war within herself. The rebellious South was holding on, not with any hope of subduing the North, but in the expectation of support from England.

England herself was divided. Though England had abolished slavery on her own soil almost a century earlier, still the detestable practise had its apologists, and there were those who held the rude blacks incapable of assuming the dignities of freedom. I was to seek out the Dahomeys and the Congolese on their own grounds and give the lie to those who thought them less than men.

"Tell England," said Miss Cox,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"that the so-called primitive Negroes possessed great empires when our fathers lived in wattle huts. Tell England that the black lawgivers of Solomon's time are true representatives of their people, and that the monstrous caricature of the plantation black is a venal creation of an ignoble class!"

She spoke like that, but she also handed me a cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds to defray my expenses of travel and to subsidize a wide distribution of the numbers of *Labour's Voice* which would contain my correspondence.

Despite her sometimes grotesque manner, Miss Cox's project was not an unwise one. Whatever enlightenment could be bought at a price of two hundred and fifty pounds was a blow at human slavery. Nor, being barely twenty, was I much distressed by the thought of a voyage to strange lands.

In no time at all, I had turned the direction of *Labour's Voice* over to my tested friends and contributors Mr. Samuel Blackett and Miss Emma Chatto (they married a month later) and in a week I was aboard a French "composite ship," iron of frame and wooden of skin, bound for a port on the Dark Continent, the home of mystery and enchantment.

So we thought of it in those days and so, in almost as great degree, do we think of it today, though I venture to suppose that, once this great war is over, those same creations of Count Zeppelin which bombed me last night may dispel some of the mystery, exorcise the enchantment and bring light into the darkness. May it be so, though I trust that whatever discoveries these aeronauts of tomorrow may bring will not repeat the discovery Herr Faesch made known to me in 1864.

THE squalor of ocean travel in those days is no part of my story. It existed and I endured it for what seemed like an eternity, but at last I bade farewell to *Le Flamant* and all her roaches, rats and stench. Nor does it become this memoir to discuss the tragic failure of the mission Miss Cox had given me.

(Those few who remember my *Peoples of the Earth* will perhaps also remember the account given in the chapter I entitled "Afric Journeyings." Those, still fewer, whose perception revealed to them an unaccountable gap between the putrid sore throat with which I was afflicted at the headwaters of the Congo and my leave taking on the Gold Coast will find herewith the chronicle of the missing days).

It is enough to say that I found no empires in 1864. If they had existed, and I believe they had, they were vanished with Sheba's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Queen. I did, however, find Herr Faesch. Or he found me.

How shall I describe Herr Faesch for you? I shan't, Shaw notwithstanding, permit myself so hackneyed a term as "hardy Swiss"; I am not so far removed from the youthful spring of creation as that. Yet Swiss he was, and surely hardy as well, for he discovered me (or his natives did) a thousand miles from a community of Europeans, deserted by my own bearers, nearer to death than ever I have been since. He told me that I tried thrice to kill him, in my delirium; but he nursed me well and I lived. As you see.

He was a scientific man, a student of Nature's ways, and a healer, though one cure was beyond him. For, sick though I was, he was more ravaged by destructive illness than I. I woke in a firelit hut with a rank poultice at my throat and a naked savage daubing at my brow, and I was terrified; no, not of the native, but of the awful cadaverous face, ghost-white, that frowned down at me from the shadows.

That was my first sight of Herr Faesch.

When, a day later, I came able to sit up and to talk, I found him a gentle and brave man, whose English was every bit as good as my own, whose knowledge surpassed that of any human I met before or since. But the mark of death was on him. In that equatorial jungle, his complexion was alabaster. Ruling the reckless black warriors who served him, his strength yet was less than a child's. In those steaming afternoons when I hardly dared stir from my cot for fear of stroke, he wore gloves and a woollen scarf at his neck.

We had, in all, three days together. As I regained my health, his health dwindled.

He introduced himself to me as a native of Geneva, that colorful city on the finest lake of the Alps. He listened courteously while I told him of my own errand and did me, and the absent Miss Cox, the courtesy of admiring the spirit which prompted it — though he was not sanguine of my prospects of finding the empires.

He said nothing of what had brought him to this remote wilderness, but I thought I knew. Surely gold. Perhaps diamonds or some other gem, but I thought not; gold was much more plausible.

I had picked up enough of the native dialect to catch perhaps one word in twenty of what he said to his natives and they to him — enough, at any rate, to know that when he left me in their charge for some hours, that first day, he was going to a hole in the ground. It could only be a mine, and what, I asked myself, would a European trouble to mine in the heart of unexplored Africa but gold?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was wrong, of course. It was not gold at all.

WELLS says that they are doing astonishing things at the Cavendish Laboratory, but I do think that Herr Faesch might have astonished even Wells. Certainly he astonished me. On the second day of my convalescence, I found myself strong enough to be up and walking about.

Say that I was prying. Perhaps I was. It was oppressively hot — I dared not venture outside — and yet I was too restless to lie abed waiting for Herr Faesch's return. I found myself examining the objects on his camp table and there were, indeed, nuggets. But the nuggets were not gold. They were a silvery metal, blackened and discolored, but surely without gold's yellow hue; they were rather small, like irregular lark's eggs, and yet they were queerly heavy. Perhaps there were a score of them, aggregating about a pound or two.

I rattled them thoughtfully in my hand, and then observed that across the tent, in a laboratory jar with a glass stopper, there were perhaps a dozen more — yes, and in yet another place in that tent, in a pottery dish, another clutch of the things. I thought to bring them close together so that I might compare them. I fetched the jar and set it on the table; I went after the pellets in the pottery dish.

Herr Faesch's voice, shaking with emotion, halted me. "Mr. Lewes!" he whispered harshly. "Stop, sir!"

I turned, and there was the man, his eyes wide with horror, standing at the flap of the tent. I made my apologies, but he waved them aside.

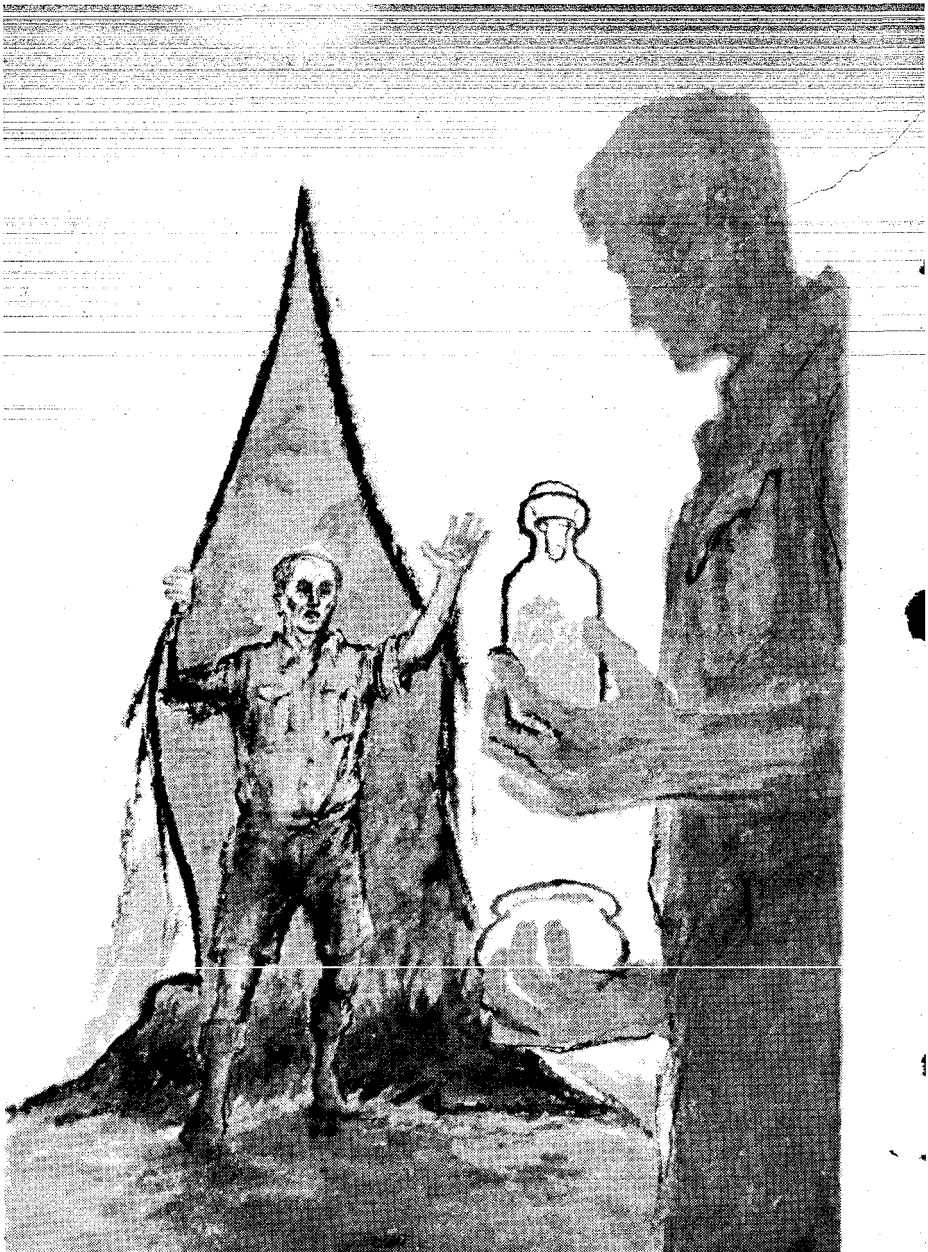
"No, no," he croaked, "I know you meant no harm. But I tell you, Mr. Lewes, you were very near to death a moment ago."

I glanced at the pellets. "From these, Herr Faesch?"

"Yes, Mr. Lewes. From those." He tottered into the tent and retrieved the pottery dish from my hands. Back to its corner it went; then the jar, back across the tent again. "They must not come together. No, sir," he said, nodding thoughtfully, though I had said nothing with which he might have been agreeing, "they must not come together."

He sat down. "Mr Lewes," he whispered, "have you ever heard of uranium?" I had not. "Or of pitchblende? No? Well," he said earnestly, "I assure you that you will. These ingots, Mr. Lewes, are uranium, but not the standard metal of commerce. No, sir. They are a rare variant form, indistinguishable by the most delicate of chemical tests from the ordinary metal, but possessed of characteristics which are — I shall merely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

say 'wonderful,' Mr. Lewes, for I dare not use the term which comes first to mind."

"Remarkable," said I, feeling that some such response was wanted.

HE agreed. "Remarkable indeed, my dear Mr. Lewes! You really cannot imagine how remarkable. Suppose I should tell you that the mere act of placing those few nuggets you discovered in close juxtaposition to each other would liberate an immense amount of energy. Suppose I should tell you that if a certain critical quantity of this metal should be joined together, an explosion would result. Eh, Mr. Lewes? What of that?"

I could only say again, "Remarkable, Herr Faesch." I knew nothing else to say. I was not yet one-and-twenty, I had had no interest in making chemists' stinks, and much of what he said was Greek to me—or was science to me, which was worse, for I should have understood the Greek tolerably well. Also a certain apprehension lingered in my mind. That terrible white face, those fired eyes, his agitated speech — I could not be blamed, I think. I believed he might be mad. And though I listened, I heard not, as he went on to tell me of what his discovery might mean.

The next morning he thrust a sheaf of manuscript at me. "Read, Mr. Lewes!" he commanded me and went off to his mine; but something went wrong. I drowsed through a few pages and made nothing of them except that he thought in some way his nuggets had affected his health. There was a radiant glow in the mine, and the natives believed that glow meant sickness and in time death, and Herr Faesch had come to agree with the natives. A pity, I thought absently, turning in for a nap.

A monstrous smashing sound awakened me. No one was about. I ran out, thrusting aside the tent flap and there, over a hill, through the interstices of the trees, I saw a huge and angry cloud. I don't know how to describe it; I have never since seen its like, and pray God the world never shall again until the end of time.

Five miles away it must have been, but there was heat from it; the tent itself was charred. Tall it was—I don't know how tall, stretching straight and thin from the ground to a toadstool crown shot with lightnings.

The natives came after a time, and though they were desperately afraid, I managed to get from them that it was Herr Faesch's mine that had blown up, along with Herr Faesch and a dozen of themselves. More than that, they would not say.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And I never saw one of them again. In a few days, when I was strong enough, I made my way back to the river and there I was found and helped — I have never known by whom. Half dazed, my fever recurring, I remember only endless journeying, until I found myself near a port.

YES, there was explosion enough for any man.

That whippersnapper Wells! Suppose, I put it to you, that some such "radium bomb" should be made. Conceive the captains of Kaiser Will's dirigible fleet possessed of a few nuggets apiece such as those Herr Faesch owned half a century ago. Imagine them cruising above the city of London, sowing their dragon's-teeth pellets in certain predetermined places, until in time a sufficient accumulation was reached to set the whole thing off. Can you think what horror it might set free upon the world?

And so I have never told this story, nor ever would if it were not for those same Zeppelin dirigible balloons. Even now I think it best to withhold it until this war is over, a year or two perhaps. (And that will probably make it posthumous — if only to accommodate Shaw — but no matter.)

I have seen a great deal. I know what I know, and I feel what I feel; and I tell you, this marvelous decade that stretches ahead of us after this present war will open new windows on freedom for the human race. Can it be doubted? Poor Bagley's letters from the trenches tell me that the very *poilus* and Tommies are determined to build a new world on the ruins of the old.

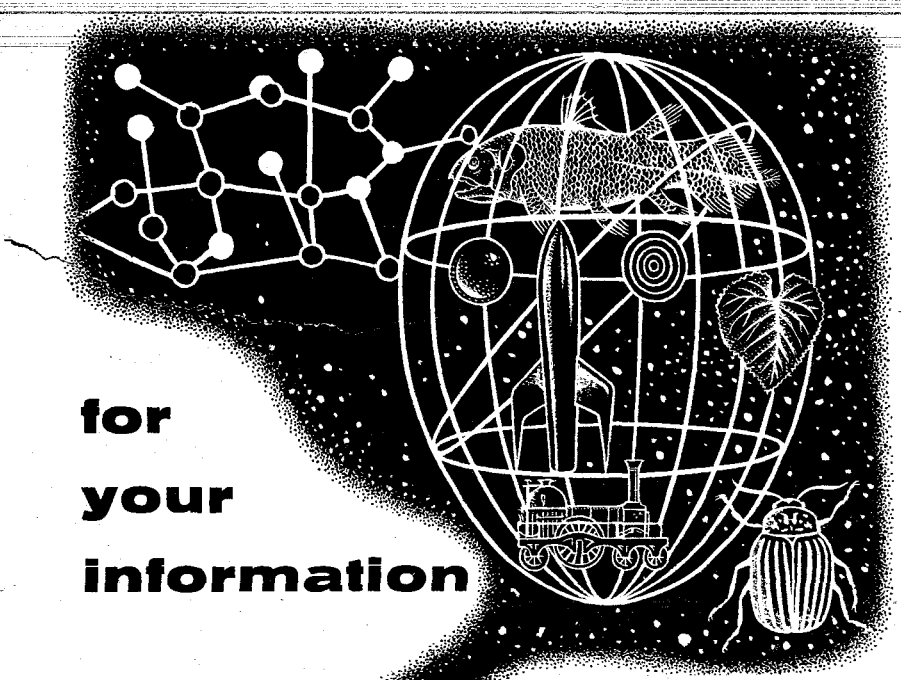
Well, perhaps Herr Faesch's nuggets will help them, these wiser, nobler children of the dawn who are to follow us. They will know what to make of them. One thing is sure: Count Zeppelin has made it impossible for Herr Faesch's metal ever to be used for war. Fighting on the ground itself was terrible enough; this new dimension of warfare will end it. Imagine sending dirigibles across the skies to sow such horrors! Imagine what monstrous brains might plan such an assault! Merciful heaven. They wouldn't dare.

— **FREDERIK POHL AND C. M. KORNBLUTH**

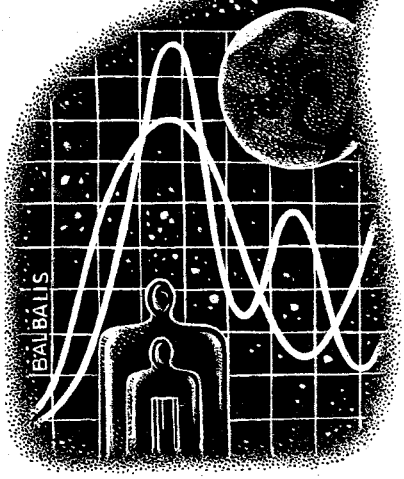
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Look for the new great giant 196-page *Galaxy* on sale the 1st week in December!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



for your information



BY WILLY LEY

THE STRANGE PLANET NEXT DOOR

THERE is a strange planet of which only a little is known so far. No explorer has yet succeeded in putting his foot on its surface while still alive; much less has anybody been able to do so and return to report on his experiences.

However, this world has been remotely explored by probes. Researchers have succeeded in capturing outlandish life-forms adapted to the impossible environment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

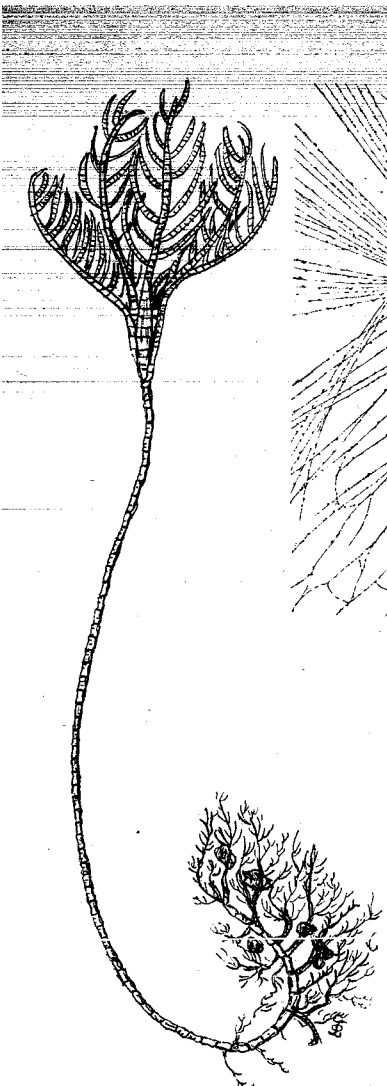


Fig. 1: Rhizocrinus lofotensis, living crinoid discovered in 1850 at depth of 450 fathoms. Illustration copied from Pastor Sars's original report. The animal is about 4 inches tall

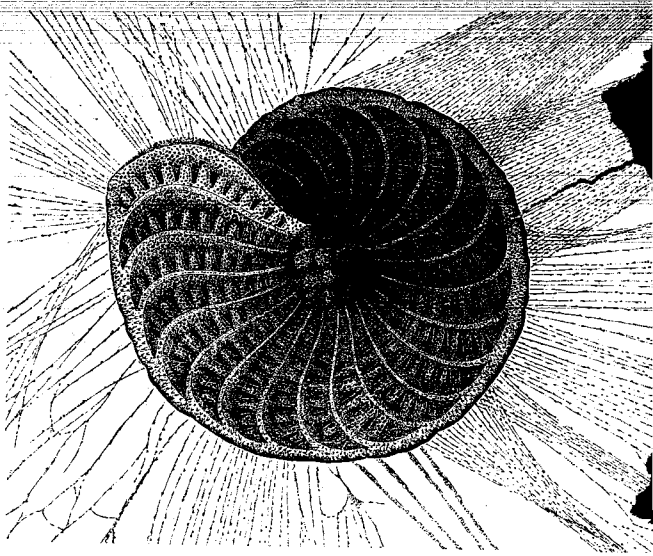


Fig. 2: Polystomella strigillata, a foraminifer. Magnified 200 times

The facts known about it so far are as follows:

The pressure at the surface is several hundred times the pressure which humans consider normal; in some places, it goes up to a thousand times normal. The temperature is to all intents and purposes the same, regardless of latitude, time of day or season. What variations there are are minor, amounting to two or three degrees, with the average hovering some five

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

degrees above the freezing point of water. Likewise there are no changes in illumination, regardless of time of day or season. Surprisingly, the abundance of life-forms is simply fantastic, both in number of individuals and in the number of different life-forms. At unknown intervals — seasonally? — long-lasting and very dense mud winds are blowing, presumably changing local topography to a very large extent.

This description of a strange planet could have been invented, it seems to me, by Stanley G. Weinbaum in the dim past of science fiction. And it does sound a bit like Dr. E. E. Smith's description of the planet Trenco. Actually it is a description of a real and otherwise rather well-known planet, at least of about half of it. It is the planet next door to us — the bottom of the ocean.

OCEANOGRAPHY is a rather young science, not quite as young, of course, as nuclear physics or space medicine, but young just the same. This may sound surprising in view of the fact that people have been sailing the seas for thousands of years, that tribes and nations made their living by catching fish and that for many centuries trade and sailing were virtually synonymous terms. Fact is, however, that until about a century ago the study of the seas was literally superficial. What happened below about twenty fathoms, the greatest depth to which fishing nets were lowered, was of no interest to anybody. The currents the sailors were interested in were surface currents. The swarming of fish which interested the fisherman was surface swarming.

People still speak of the abyss when they refer to the ocean beyond the sight of land. The word itself means "bottomless" and is Low Latin of Greek derivation. No modern man would believe it to be strictly true, but for a long time sailors thought that the high seas were actually bottomless. We know this mostly because a seventeenth-century geographer, Bernard Varenius of Hanover, devoted several pages of type to a refutation of this belief.

In this refutation, he unearthed an opinion from classical antiquity which stated that the world was symmetrical, which meant that the greatest deeps of the ocean should be equal to the highest mountains on land. I may remark in passing that this old guess is very nearly correct. After Varenius, everybody was convinced that there had to be an ocean bottom somewhere.

Beginning about a hundred and fifty years ago, some scientists went to work on a few problems. One of the first was to measure temperature. The results looked curiously alike. In the arc-

DIGITIZED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

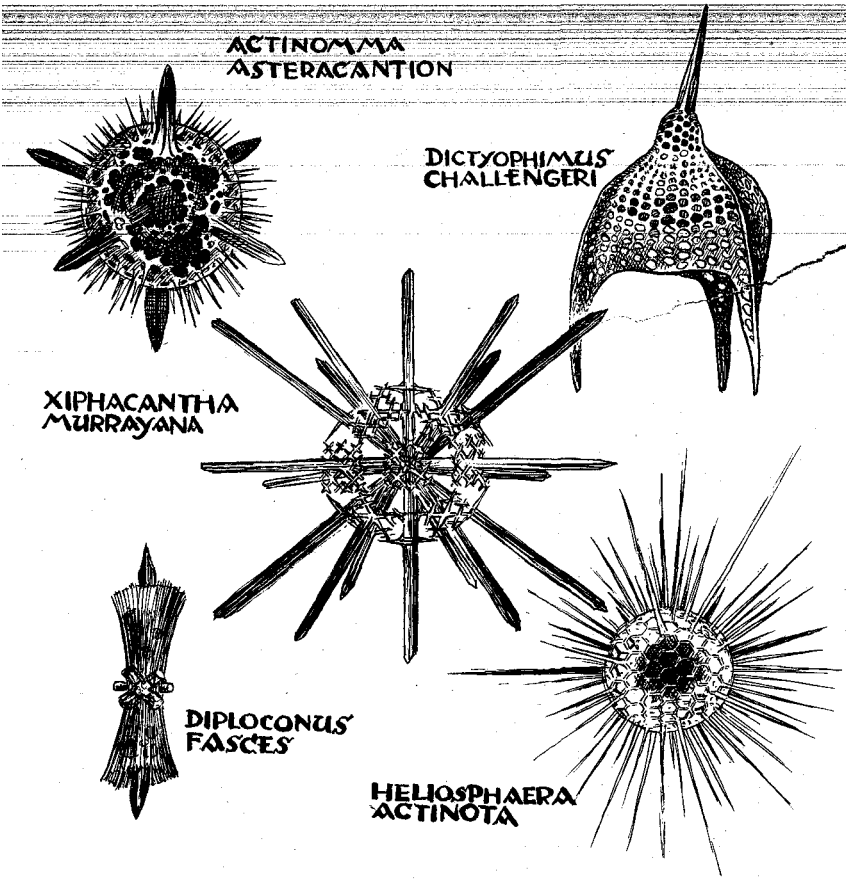


Fig. 3: Five radiolarians discovered by Ernst Haeckel. Drawn from Haeckel's original report by late Professor Gustav Wolf

tic oceans, the surface water was near freezing and stayed that way as far as the thermometers of that time could go down. In the tropical seas, it was nice and warm for the first score of feet or so. Then it got cooler, and as soon as the thermometer went below a hundred fathoms (600 feet to landlubbers), there didn't seem to be much difference between arctic and tropical measurements.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

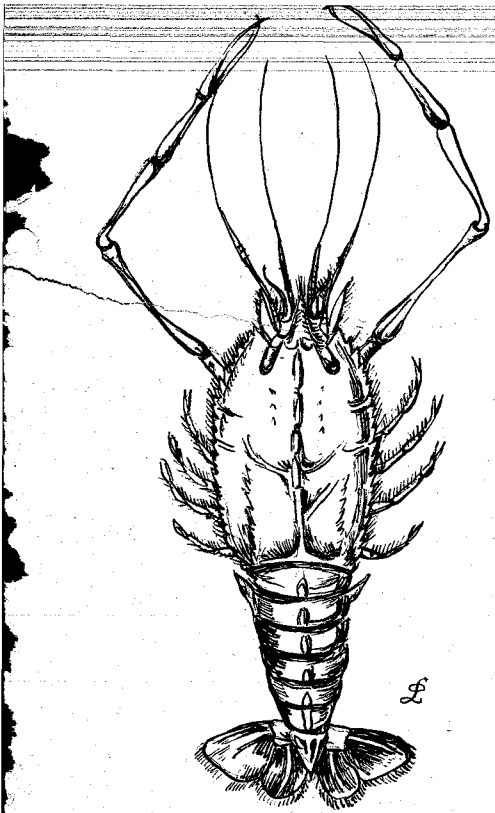


Fig. 4: Willemoesia leptodactyla, one of "extinct" eryonids discovered by Challenger expedition. Copied by Olga Ley from colored lithograph

A Frenchman by the name of Péron drew what looked like a logical conclusion: if you went still deeper, the temperature would, at one still-to-be-determined level, drop to below freezing point. The bottoms of the oceans were, without any doubt whatsoever, covered with ice.

Naturally there would be no life on these ice-covered bottoms, partly because it was too cold, partly because there was nothing to eat. Logically, too, the ice was likely to begin at a shallower level in the Arctic, although this would still have to be determined. It was not really encouraging to this theory that Sir John Ross, one day in 1818, accidentally caught a brittle star at a probable depth of 4900 feet — in Baffin Bay in the arctic.

The brittle star received the scientific name of *Gorgonocephalus* and was then quickly forgotten. If somebody had brought the case up again, he probably would have been told that the fact that Sir John Ross had found a depth of 4900 feet at that spot, coupled with the fact that the creature had become entangled in the line, still did not prove that it came from the bottom. It could have become entangled at any depth.

DURING the early part of the nineteenth century, an Englishman, Edward Forbes, did very diligent work on life in the seas, at first in the North Sea and the English Channel, later in the Mediterranean. He pointed out that marine plants needed sunlight, like any other plants. Up to a depth of about 45 fathoms, plant life was abundant, but then quickly became rare as the light began to fail. (Later researchers put the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lower limit of active plant life at 175 fathoms.) But where there was no plant life, there could be no animal life; below the level of 1800 feet, or 300 fathoms, there had to be a zone that was not populated, could not be populated. This was Edward Forbes' *Abyssus Theory*, advanced in 1843 and based on his own very careful and very thorough researches in an "abysmal region" of the Mediterranean Sea.

Very few scientific theories had such a short and unhappy life as Forbes' Abyssus Theory. A Norwegian zoologist, Pastor Michael Sars, who as a young man and while *candidatus theologiae* had made important discoveries about the sex life and the metamorphosis of marine mollusks, started fishing near the Lofoten Islands in the summer of 1850, assisted by his 15-year-old son Johan Ernst. Pastor Sars not only obtained living things from a depth of 450 fathoms, he obtained living things that were supposed to be tropical. Or else extinct. They were a crinoid, *Rhizocrinus lofotensis* (Fig. 1), a representative of one of the four main groups of the echinoderms.

Everybody knows some echinoderms, even if he has never heard the name. The common sea star is the typical representative of one of the main groups. The well-known sea urchin is a representative of the second one, and the sea cucumber represents the third. The fourth group, the sea lilies or crinoids, were thought to be extinct.

But then, in 1755, a naturalist received something that had been dredged from the sea not far from Martinique. It was called *Pentacrinus caput Medusae* (if you insist on a translation, it would come out as "the Medusa-headed five-sectioned something"), but it took a quarter of a century until the anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach proved that it was an echinoderm. For many years, it was considered the only surviving species of the type. For many more years, it was considered incredibly rare; as late as 1890, a naturalist had to part with eleven golden "sovereigns" for a specimen. The history of *Pentacrinus* at least enabled Pastor Sars to tell at once what it was he had caught.

Pastor Sars had started something. A whole swarm of Scandinavian marine biologists with names like Lovén, Asbjörnsen, Torell, Nordenskjöld, Lindahl and Théel went after marine life along the shorelines of Norway, Sweden, Svalbard, and even Novaya Semlyá, and were unanimous in reporting that there was no lower limit for marine life. The limit was the bottom, wherever it might be, and even that was not the whole truth, for there were forms *in* the bottom mud.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AT about the same time, English and American scientists came across deep-sea life without, at first, meaning to. What they were actually doing was determining the depth of the ocean bottom and its contours along a specific line for a specific reason. The first transatlantic cable was to be laid along that line.

To measure the distance from the surface to the bottom, a new device was employed. It consisted of a heavy metal pipe, weighed down even more by a large iron cannon ball that had been pierced like a bead. When the pipe touched bottom, a powerful spring was released which did two things: it scooped up a small amount of bottom mud, and it released the catch which had held the cannon ball in place so that it would slip off. Well, the bottom mud contained animal remains, regardless of place and depth.

The first transatlantic cable was laid in 1858, but it worked for only three months. The next one, laid in 1865, broke when about two-thirds finished. The one of 1866 was successful. Then the broken end of the 1865 cable was fished up and the laying completed after repair. The important thing was that the broken end of the 1865 cable brought animal life with it to the surface. By one of these coincidences that happen more often than one should suppose, the cable across the Mediterranean (from Sardinia to Algiers) broke at about the same time. It was fished up too, and at a portion which had been at nearly 10,000 feet for only three years, fifteen different kinds of animal life were found — right in the sea for which Forbes had originally evolved his Abyssus Theory.

The man responsible, either directly or by his example, for everything that was to follow was Professor (later Sir) Wyville Thomson of Edinburgh. Pastor Michael Sars had not only proved that there was abundant animal life in the "abyss" of the northern seas, he had even found animals best known from the geological past. Wasn't it time for Her Majesty's Government to do something about it? The Royal Society, represented by its vice president Professor Carpenter, chimed in and Her Majesty's Government finally put two small vessels of the Royal Navy, the *Lightning* and the *Porcupine*, at Wyville Thomson's disposal. They investigated the sea bottom around England, off the Spanish coast and in the Mediterranean.

It might be remarked here that the hopes of some of the scientists were off on a wrong track for a number of years to come, largely due to the accident that the first major discovery made by Pastor Sars had been a crinoid. Crinoids

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were regarded as virtually a signature of the geologic past (right now, a monograph on *The Living Crinoids* is being published; it has so many volumes that I have lost track) and it seemed quite possible that "the abyssal life" was a "Lost World" — the bottom of the Atlantic might be the bottom of a Jurassic ocean. We now know that it isn't so, and it is still slightly surprising that it isn't, but that wrong hope was a strong spur.

FOLLOWING the success of the *Porcupine* and the *Lightning*, Wyville Thomson asked for more help and got it. On December 21, 1872, the corvette *Challenger* left England for a trip which covered all the oceans except the Arctic Ocean. When the *Challenger* berthed in Portsmouth again on May 26, 1876, she had spent 719 days at sea, traveled a total of 68,890 nautical miles, measured the depth of the ocean, beyond those areas already on nautical charts, in 370 points, measured bottom temperatures in 275 places, collected 600 crates of speciments (among them a bottom-mud sample from a depth of 27,000 feet from the Pacific Ocean near the Philippines) and used up the original budget of 100,000 pounds. Another 68,000 pounds had to be spent just for the publication of the results.

Like naturally begets like. If the Queen of England could send Sir Wyville Thomson and his assistant Sir John Murray to explore the bottom of the seas, the United States could do the same. Professor Alexander Agassiz got the *Blake* to investigate, in successive trips, the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Coast of the United States. Later, the United States sent the *Albatross* into the Pacific.

And if *Her* Majesty's Government could spend 100,000 pounds on such an idealistic cause, *His* Majesty's Government (that of the Kaiser of Germany, that is) could do the same. On July 31, 1898, the steamer *Valdivia* left the harbor of Hamburg as the official German deep-sea expedition, commanded by Captain Adalbert Krech, under the scientific leadership of Professor Carl Chun, and sent off in person by the then Secretary of the Interior Count von Posadowsky. The successor to Sir Wyville Thomson, Sir John Murray, was on board for the first leg of the trip, from Germany to England.

With that noted, let's go back to the *Challenger* expedition.

Soon after the *Challenger's* return to England, the scientific world began to scatter references to foraminifers and radiolarians in interviews and popular articles so that they very nearly became household worlds. I suspect that in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many households, nobody had too clear an idea of just what foraminifers and radiolarians really were, but the terms *were* popular. Both refer to single-celled animals much like the better-known ameba. But while the ameba is naked, the others grow armor. The shell of the foraminifers is calcareous (chalky) and most of the time resembles a tiny snail shell.

Considering that they are single-celled, the foraminifers are quite large (Fig. 2). Single specimens of all of them are just visible to the naked eye if put on a contrasting background. One living form has a shell 1/20th of an inch in diameter. A few fossil forms grew to a size of nearly an inch.

The radiolarians are also single-celled and much smaller than the foraminifers, and their shells (also called "skeletons," which I find slightly misleading) are of silica. In shape, they do not follow a specific pattern, though lacy spheres of various types are frequent, but they are all beautiful.

THE reason why the *Challenger* expedition popularized these names is that their many samples of deep-sea bottom mud fell into three general classifications, namely "globigerina ooze" (*globigerina* is the most common of the foraminifers), "radiolarian ooze" and "red ooze." Each was typical for a certain depth. Near the shores, the bottom sediments for a few hundred miles out consist mostly of dry-land stuff, sand and clay and soil washed into the sea by the rivers. Then away from the land and farther down comes the gray bottom mud consisting of globigerina shells; we now know that 30 per cent of the ocean floor (amounting to 40 million square miles) is covered with globigerina ooze.

In samples from more than 12,000 feet in depth, the *Challenger* scientists found that globigerina shells became rare and soon were lacking altogether. A theory for this was thought up at once.

The *Challenger* experts assumed that the foraminifers did not live at the bottom but floated freely at shallow depths. This assumption was correct. When the individual died, the shell sank to the bottom, but below the 12,000-foot level, the sea water, being under enormous pressure, contained enough carbon dioxide to dissolve the calcareous shells. But this chemical action would not attack the silica shells of the radiolarians, so there you got radiolarian ooze. (We know of three million square miles of radiolarian ooze in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.) And the extreme deep sea also yielded "red ooze" which, it could be determined quickly, was mostly volcanic dust, often containing tiny spheres, on the order of 1/100th

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG.
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of an inch or less in diameter, micro-meteorites.

Of all this, the radiolarians most strongly took the public fancy, no doubt because of the appearance of their skeletons. And it so happened that these radiolarians had a special scientific history which not only made interesting reading but was full of the most famous names in contemporary science.

During the whole interval from Forbes' Abyssus Theory to the *Challenger* expedition, there was one scientist who was *the* authority on microscopic animals. He was Christian Gottfried Ehrenberg in Berlin. He was born in 1795 and died at the age of 81 in the year that the *Challenger* expedition returned home.

Ehrenberg probed endlessly into stagnant water, into dust, mud and ground-up rock and the whole world helped him. An American sent him the first deep-sea mud samples ever taken. That American was Matthew Fontaine Maury, at one time Superintendent of the Naval Observatory and later called the Father of Oceanography. It was Maury who had helped in the survey prior to laying the first transatlantic cable.

In Maury's samples, Ehrenberg discovered the radiolarians, though he did not give them that name. Then Ehrenberg received rock samples from the island of Barbados, packed masses of radiolarian skeletons. He concluded that the radiolarians probably lived at the bottom of the deep sea, and he never expected to see a live one. He didn't, but this was largely his fault.

SCIENTISTS have often been accused of keeping their noses buried in books and journals and neglecting nature. Ehrenberg had the opposite fault: he kept his eye glued to his microscope and did not keep up with professional literature. It must be admitted that it would have needed a kind of literary detective at first.

An obscure ship's doctor on the run from England to Australia (on *H.M.S. Rattlesnake*) fished little lumps of a jellylike substance from the ocean in 1851. His microscope told him that these lumps were colonies of single-celled animals, each one having a most beautiful skeleton. The ship's doctor was the later very famous Thomas Huxley, Darwin's friend. He also had failed to follow the literature (understandable for a ship's doctor of his time) and did not know about Ehrenberg's finds in Maury's mud samples.

The next famous name in the story was that of Professor Johannes Müller. He had seen such tiny strands of jelly in 1849 but paid no attention until he read Huxley's report in 1855. Then, really going to work on them, he almost

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drowned off the coast of Norway in pursuit of radiolarians. But he invented the name, and he influenced one of his pupils who had exceptional artistic talent to continue these studies. The name of his pupil was Ernst Haeckel, who began his researches near Messina in 1859. In 1862, the first book devoted to the radiolarians was published, a folio volume of 572 pages of print with 35 plates of copper engravings (Fig. 3). Other zoologists felt that Ernst Haeckel had exhausted the theme with this volume. This probably was more or less true at the moment.

But then the *Challenger* expedition came home. While still *en route,* the men of the *Challenger* had made microscope slides and decided that all mud containing more than 20 per cent radiolarian skeletons should be labeled radiolarian ooze. Of course somebody had to work this material. The aging and ailing Sir Wyville Thomson discussed this with his friend Sir John Murray. Their opinion was unanimous: Ernst Haeckel. Haeckel was invited to England; he accepted the offer, saying that it would take him three years, possibly as long as five years. It took ten.

It also took three volumes, totaling 2750 pages with 140 plates, to describe just the radiolarians. (These three volumes were labeled "Part XVIII" of the Challenger Report.) Haeckel's teacher Müller had known 50 different species. In Haeckel's monograph of 1862, another 144 species were added. The *Challenger* discovered 3508 additional new species. Haeckel later said that his enthusiasm never abated, but that it strained his imagination to invent 3500 new scientific names!

DUE to a number of circumstances, not the least of which was the accidental cluttering of many famous names, mention of the *Challenger* expedition always made one think of radiolarians. Actually they were just one of many interesting and important results.

The *Challenger* expedition made many discoveries and, almost more important, confirmed many reasonable if still unproven theories. The crinoids, for one, were still a rather flourishing branch of the echinoderms, though the living forms are not very large and not conspicuous. The *Challenger* was the first to show that the bottom temperature was within a very few degrees the same everywhere. The idea of mud "storms" (later confirmed) was very tentatively mentioned. A number of deep-sea animals of not quite credible shapes were taken for the first time.

One of the early Scandinavian scientists who followed in the footsteps of Pastor Sars compared general sea life to general land life by saying that the worms did the same

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were for the seas what the mammals were for the land, while the rôles of the insect life on land were filled in the seas by the crabs in their multitudes.

The *Challenger* results could say "yes" to this idea and add "anywhere and at any depth." But this nice comparison omitted something very typical for the sea. On land, the only thing that does not move around are the plants. The plants of the seas do not move either, but in the ocean there are very many animals which also don't move: oysters and all their relatives, sponges, corals, sea anemones and so forth.

Originally, the rather natural tendency had been to sort ocean life according to the depth where it lived; after the *Challenger* returned, another sorting method triumphed, the sorting into the three categories called *Benthos*, *Nekton* and *Plankton*.

Benthos is everything that does not move (except in juvenile stages) and it includes the true plants (algae) as well as corals, barnacles, sea anemones, sponges, plus those which, while able to move, do not normally do so, like sea stars, sea urchins, many worms.

The *Nekton* comprises everything that moves actively: almost all fishes, whales, the larger octopi. The *Plankton* comprises the passforms of the *Plankton* happen to be tiny, while those of the *Nekton* are usually large.*

This division according to habits, if they may be called that, sounds at first hearing like the subdivisions of primitive zoology of the sixteenth century, where everything living was divided into "animals with feet," "animals with fins" and "animals with wings." But in the seas there is not just one but a variety of reasons for sorting first into habits, then into habitats and finally into a proper zoological classification.

Well, what happened to the charming idea that the abysmal zone might harbor a "lost world"? It happens not to be true. Of course there are so-called living fossils in the ocean. One can make the sweeping and, to a layman, rather surprising statement that all the sharks could be considered as living fossils, since they are a very old group of the vertebrates. But most sharks are pelagic surface swimmers, though deep-sea forms are known. And one of the very oldest living fossils is *Limulus*, the horseshoe crab, a rather familiar creature o

*The oft-used term "pelagic" just means "of the (open) sea" as distinct from "littoral," which means "near the shore," specifically the area uncovered at low tide. "Pelagic" then comprises both *Nekton* and *Plankton*, provided it is far from the shore.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Americans along the Atlantic coast, but a much-admired survivor from the dim geologic past to people elsewhere. Far from being a deep-sea form, it is an animal of the littoral zone.

Only one group of crabs, the so-called eryonids, fits the idea of living fossils from the abyss. These eryonids were known fossils from Jurassic sediments — about 180 million years old — and they were then definitely inhabitants of the littoral zone. Naturally they were believed to be extinct, until the *Challenger* expedition fished some from the deep sea off Africa. They do not differ much from their Jurassic ancestors except that they have lost their eyes in the meantime. Of course we can't tell how the Jurassic eryonids were colored; the living forms have bright red claws, feelers, legs and tail, while the body is the color of light pink chalk.

Maybe Latimeria, the coelacanth fish from the area of the Comores Islands (see my article in GALAXY, May 1956), also fits the idea of a living fossil from the abyssal zone. We know that it is a living fossil of great age and an importance commensurate with this age. But we are not too certain yet whether it should be labeled a deep-sea fish.

Within a single century, scientific opinion about the deep sea had to change fundamentally three times. At first, the bottom was thought to be ice-covered; that was disproved. Then it was "proved" to be lifeless; this was disproved even more thoroughly. Then it was thought to be a "lost world," but as it turned out, the seas harbor fewer living fossils than the land areas of our planet.

But, though it is not a "lost world," it certainly is a very strange world, strange enough to qualify for a planet thousands of light-years away.

— WILLY LEY

FOR 2500 YEARS

Man has sought the state of "CLEAR"
This state is now attainable for the first time in Man's History.
The goal of all Mystic and Occult Science has been attained.
It can be done for you.

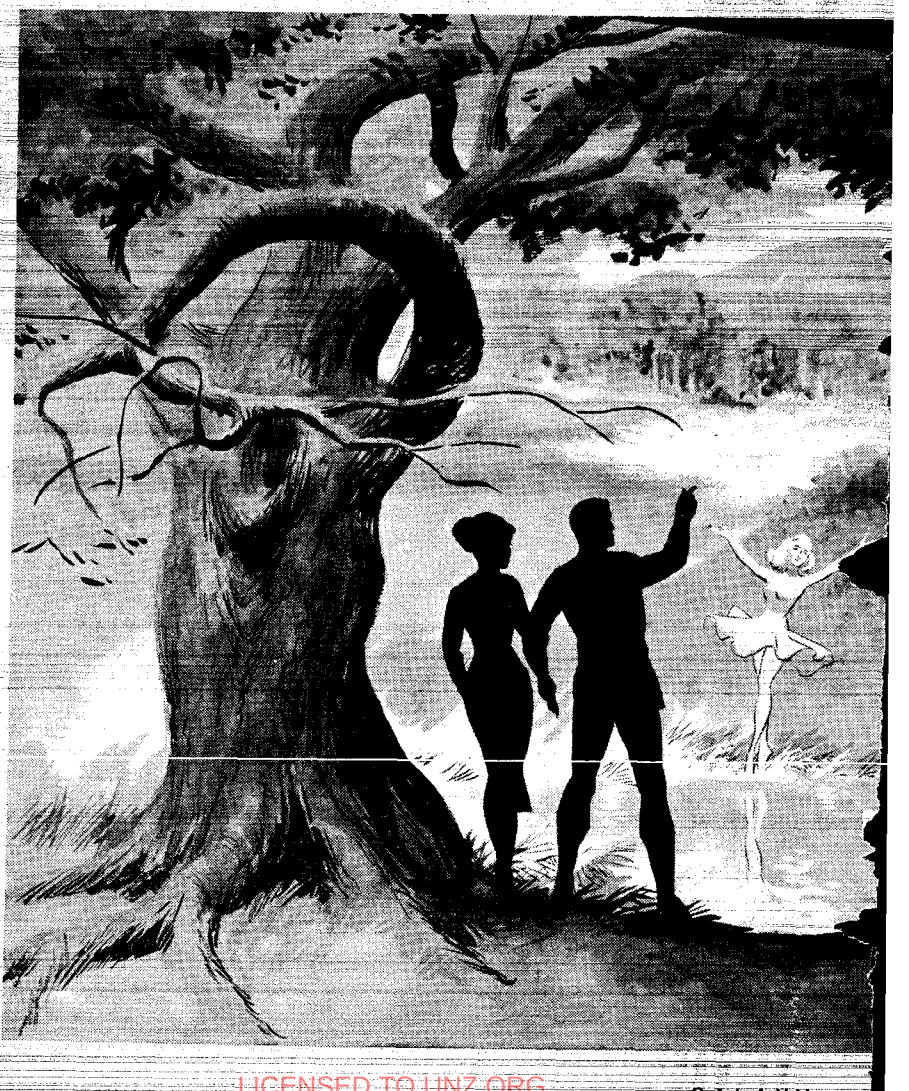
Write H A S I

1812 19th Street, N.W. Washington 9, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ullward's Retreat

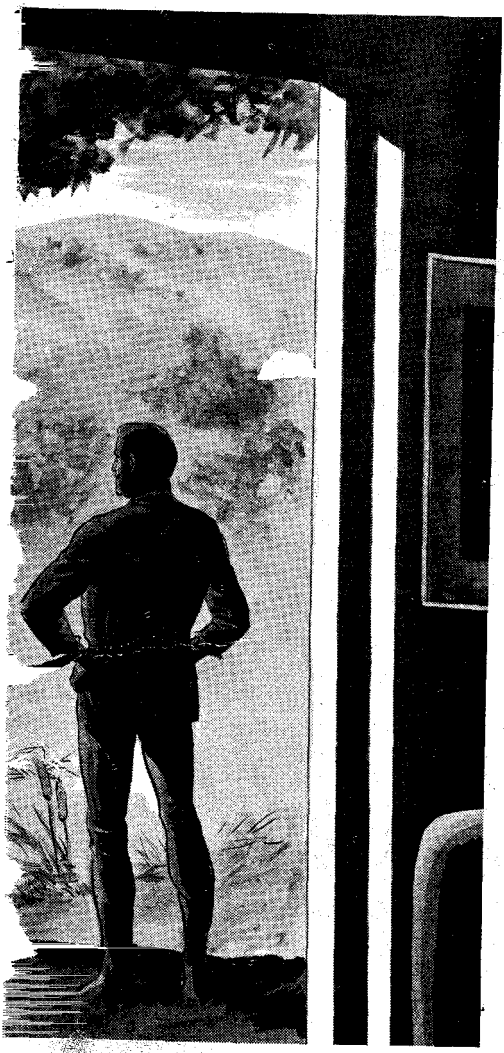
By JACK VANCE



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A big man in every way, Ullward just wasn't satisfied to be an island unto himself . . . it had to be either a whole planet or nothing!

Illustrated by WOOD



BRUHAM Ullward had invited three friends to lunch at his ranch: Ted and Ravelin Seehoe, and their adolescent daughter Iugenae. After an eye-bulging feast, Ullward offered around a tray of the digestive pastilles which had won him his wealth.

"A wonderful meal," said Ted Seehoe reverently. "Too much, really. I'll need one of these. The algae was absolutely marvelous."

Ullward made a smiling easy gesture. "It's the genuine stuff."

Ravelin Seehoe, a fresh-faced, rather positive young woman of eighty or ninety, reached for a pastille. "A shame there's not more of it. The synthetic we get is hardly recognizable as algae."

"It's a problem," Ullward admitted. "I clubbed up with some friends; we bought a little mat in the Ross Sea and grow all our own."

"Think of that," exclaimed Ravelin. "Isn't it frightfully expensive?"

Ullward pursed his lips whimsically. "The good things in life come high. Luckily, I'm able to afford a bit extra."

"What I keep telling Ted—" began Ravelin, then stopped as Ted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned her a keen warning glance.

Ullward bridged the rift. "Money isn't everything. I have a flat of algae, my ranch; you have your daughter — and I'm sure you wouldn't trade."

Ravelin regarded Iugenae critically. "I'm not so sure."

TED patted Iugenae's hand. "When do you have your own child, Lamster Ullward?" (*Lamster: contraction of Landmaster—the polite form of address in current use.*)

"Still some time yet. I'm thirty-seven billion down the list."

"A pity," said Ravelin Seehoe brightly, "when you could give a child so many advantages."

"Some day, some day, before I'm too old."

"A shame," said Ravelin, "but it has to be. Another fifty billion people and we'd have no privacy whatever!" She looked admiringly around the room, which was used for the sole purpose of preparing food and dining.

Ullward put his hands on the arms of his chair, hitched forward a little. "Perhaps you'd like to look around the ranch?" He spoke in a casual voice, glancing from one to the other.

Iugenae clapped her hands; Ravelin beamed. "If it wouldn't be too much trouble!" "Oh, we'd love to, Lamster Ullward!" cried Iugenae.

"I've always wanted to see your ranch," said Ted. "I've heard so much about it."

"It's an opportunity for Iugenae I wouldn't want her to miss," said Ravelin. She shook her finger at Iugenae. "Remember, Miss Puss, notice everything very carefully — and don't *touch!*"

"May I take pictures, Mother?"

"You'll have to ask Lamster Ullward."

"Of course, of course," said Ullward. "Why in the world not?" He rose to his feet — a man of more than middle stature, more than middle pudginess, with straight sandy hair, round blue eyes, a prominent beak of a nose. Almost three hundred years old, he guarded his health with great zeal, and looked little more than two hundred.

He stepped to the door, checked the time, touched a dial on the wall. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, we're quite ready," said Ravelin.

Ullward snapped back the wall, to reveal a view over a sylvan glade. A fine oak tree shaded a pond growing with rushes. A path led through a field toward a wooded valley a mile in the distance.

"Magnificent," said Ted. "Simply magnificent!"

They stepped outdoors into the sunlight. Iugenae flung her arms out, twirled, danced in a circle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Look! I'm all alone! I'm out here all by myself!"

"Iugenae!" called Ravelin sharply. "Be careful! Stay on the path! That's real grass and you mustn't damage it."

Iugenae ran ahead to the pond. "Mother!" she called back. "Look at these funny little jumpy things! And look at the flowers!"

"The animals are frogs," said Ullward. "They have a very interesting life-history. You see the little fishlike things in the water?"

"Aren't they funny! Mother, do come here!"

"Those are called tadpoles and they will presently become frogs, indistinguishable from the ones you see."

RAVELIN and Ted advanced with more dignity, but were as interested as Iugenae in the frogs.

"Smell the fresh air," Ted told Ravelin. "You'd think you were back in the early times."

"It's absolutely exquisite," said Ravelin. She looked around her. "One has the feeling of being able to wander on and on and on."

"Come around over here," called Ullward from beyond the pool. "This is the rock garden."

In awe, the guests stared at the ledge of rock, stained with red and yellow lichen, tufted with green moss. Ferns grew from a crevice; there were several fragile clusters of white flowers.

"Smell the flowers, if you wish," Ullward told Iugenae. "But please don't touch them; they stain rather easily."

Iugenae sniffed. "Mmmm!"

"Are they real?" asked Ted.

"The moss, yes. That clump of ferns and these little succulents are real. The flowers were designed for me by a horticulturist and are exact replicas of certain ancient species. We've actually improved on the odor."

"Wonderful, wonderful," said Ted.

"Now come this way — no, don't look back; I want you to get the total effect . . ." An expression of vexation crossed his face.

"What's the trouble?" asked Ted.

"It's a damned nuisance," said Ullward. "Hear that sound?"

Ted became aware of a faint rolling rumble, deep and almost unheard. "Yes. Sounds like some sort of factory."

"It is. On the floor below. A rug-works. One of the looms creates this terrible row. I've complained, but they pay no attention . . . Oh, well, ignore it. Now stand over here—and look around!"

His friends gasped in rapture. The view from this angle was a rustic bungalow in an Alpine valley, the door being the opening into Ullward's dining room.

"What an illusion of distance!"

DIGITIZED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exclaimed Ravelin. "A person would almost think he was alone."

"A beautiful piece of work," said Ted. "I'd swear I was looking into ten miles — at least five miles — of distance."

"I've got a lot of space here," said Ullward proudly. "Almost three-quarters of an acre. Would you like to see it by moonlight?"

"Oh, could we?"

ULLWARD went to a concealed switch-panel; the sun seemed to race across the sky. A fervent glow of sunset lit the valley; the sky burned peacock blue, gold, green, then came twilight — and the rising full moon came up behind the hill.

"This is absolutely marvelous," said Ravelin softly. "How can you bring yourself to leave it?"

"It's hard," admitted Ullward. "But I've got to look after business too. More money, more space."

He turned a knob; the moon floated across the sky, sank. Stars appeared, forming the age-old patterns. Ullward pointed out the constellations and the first-magnitude stars by name, using a pencil-torch for a pointer. Then the sky flushed with lavender and lemon yellow and the sun appeared once more. Unseen ducts sent a current of cool air through the glade.

"Right now I'm negotiating for an area behind this wall here." He tapped at the depicted mountainside, an illusion given reality and three-dimensionality by laminations inside the pane. "It's quite a large area—over a hundred square feet. The owner wants a fortune, naturally."

"I'm surprised he wants to sell," said Ted. "A hundred square feet means real privacy."

"There's been a death in the family," explained Ullward. "The owner's four-great-grandfather passed on and the space is temporarily surplus."

Ted nodded. "I hope you're able to get it."

"I hope so too. I've got rather flamboyant ambitions—eventually I hope to own the entire quarter-block — but it takes time. People don't like to sell their space and everyone is anxious to buy."

"Not we," said Ravelin cheerfully. "We have our little home. We're snug and cozy and we're putting money aside for investment."

"Wise," agreed Ullward. "A great many people are space-poor. Then when a chance to make real money comes up, they're undercapitalized. Until I scored with the digestive pastilles, I lived in a single rented locker. I was cramped — but I don't regret it today."

They returned through the glade toward Ullward's house, stopping at the oak tree. "This is my special pride," said Ullward. "A genuine oak tree!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Genuine?" asked Ted in astonishment. "I assumed it was simulation."

"So many people do," said Ullward. "No, it's genuine."

"Take a picture of the tree, Iugenae, please. But don't touch it. You might damage the bark."

"Perfectly all right to touch the bark," assured Ullward.

HE looked up into the branches, then scanned the ground. He stooped, picked up a fallen leaf. "This grew on the tree," he said. "Now, Iugenae, I want you to come with me." He went to the rock garden, pulled a simulated rock aside, to reveal a cabinet with washbasin. "Watch carefully." He showed her the leaf. "Notice? It's dry and brittle and brown."

"Yes, Lamster Ullward." Iugenae craned her neck.

"First I dip it in this solution." He took a beaker full of dark liquid from a shelf. "So. That restores the green color. We wash off the excess, then dry it. Now we rub this next fluid carefully into the surface. Notice, it's flexible and strong now. One more solution — a plastic coating — and there we are, a true oak leaf, perfectly genuine. It's yours."

"Oh, Lamster Ullward! Thank you ever so much!" She ran off to show her father and mother, who were standing by the pool, luxuriating in the feeling of space, watching the frogs. "See what Lamster Ullward gave me!"

"You be very careful with it," said Ravelin. "When we get home, we'll find a nice little frame and you can hang it in your locker."

The simulated sun hung in the western sky. Ullward led the group to a sundial. "An antique, countless years old. Pure marble, carved by hand. It works too — entirely functional. Notice. Three-fifteen by the shadow on the dial . . ." He peered at his beltwatch, squinted at the sun. "Excuse me one moment." He ran to the control board, made an adjustment. The sun lurched ten degrees across the sky. Ullward returned, checked the sundial. "That's better. Notice. Three-fifty by the sundial, three-fifty by my watch. Isn't that something now?"

"It's wonderful," said Ravelin earnestly.

"It's the loveliest thing I've ever seen," chirped Iugenae.

Ravelin looked around the ranch, sighed wistfully. "We hate to leave, but I think we must be returning home."

"It's been a wonderful day, Lamster Ullward," said Ted. "A wonderful lunch, and we enjoyed seeing your ranch."

"You'll have to come out again," invited Ullward. "I always enjoy company."

He led them into the dining room, through the living room-bed-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ily took a last look across the spacious interior, pulled on their mantles, stepped into their run-shoes, made their farewells. Ullward slid back the door. The Seehoes looked out, waited till a gap appeared in the traffic. They waved good-by, pulled the hoods over their heads, stepped out into the corridor.

THE run-shoes spun them toward their home, selecting the appropriate turnings, sliding automatically into the correct lift- and drop-pits. Deflection fields twisted them through the throngs. Like the Seehoes, everyone wore mantle and hood of filmy reflective stuff to safeguard privacy. The illusion-pane along the ceiling of the corridor presented a view of towers dwindling up into a cheerful blue sky, as if the pedestrian were moving along one of the windy upper passages.

The Seehoes approached their home. Two hundred yards away, they angled over to the wall. If the flow of traffic carried them past, they would be forced to circle the block and make another attempt to enter. Their door slid open as they spun near; they ducked into the opening, swinging around on a metal grab-bar.

They removed their mantles and run-shoes, sliding skillfully past each other. Iugenae pivoted

room for both Ted and Ravelin to sit down. The house was rather small for the three of them; they could well have used another twelve square feet, but rather than pay exorbitant rent, they preferred to save the money with an eye toward Iugenae's future.

Ted sighed in satisfaction, stretching his legs luxuriously under Ravelin's chair. "Ullward's ranch notwithstanding, it's nice to be home."

Iugenae backed out of the bathroom.

Ravelin looked up. "It's time for your pill, dear."

Iugenae screwed up her face. "Oh, Mama! Why do I have to take pills? I feel perfectly well."

"They're good for you, dear."

Iugenae sullenly took a pill from the dispenser. "Runy says you make us take pills to keep us from growing up."

Ted [illegible] exchanged glances.

"Just take your pill," said Ravelin, "and never mind what Runy says."

"But how is it that I'm 38 and Ermara Burk's only 32 and she's got a figure and I'm like a slat?"

"No arguments, dear. Take your pill."

Ted jumped to his feet. "Here, Babykin, sit down."

Iugenae protested, but Ted held up his hand. "I'll sit in the niche.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I've got a few calls that I have to make."

He sidled past Ravelin, seated himself in the niche in front of the communication screen. The illusion-pane behind him was custom-built — Ravelin, in fact, had designed it herself. It simulated a merry little bandit's den, the walls draped in red and yellow silk, a bowl of fruit on the rustic table, a guitar on the bench, a copper teakettle simmering on the countertop stove. The pane had been rather expensive, but when anyone communicated with the Seehoes, it was the first thing they saw, and here the house-proud Ravelin had refused to stint.

Before Ted could make his call, the signal light flashed. He answered; the screen opened to display his friend Loren Aigle, apparently sitting in an airy arched rotunda, against a background of fleecy clouds — an illusion which Ravelin had instantly recognized as an inexpensive stock effect.

[illegible]n and Elme, his wife, were [illegible]ous to hear of the Seehoes' visit to the Ullward ranch. Ted described the afternoon in detail. "Space, space and more space! Isolation pure and simple! Absolute privacy! You can hardly imagine it! A fortune in illusion-panes."

"Nice," said Loren Aigle. "I'll tell you one you'll find hard to believe. Today I registered a whole planet to a man." Loren worked in the Certification Bureau of the Extraterrestrial Properties Agency.

Ted was puzzled and uncomprehending. "A whole planet? How so?"

Loren explained. "He's a free-lance spaceman. Still a few left."

"But what's he planning to do with an entire planet?"

"Live there, he claims."

"Alone?"

Loren nodded. "I had quite a chat with him. Earth is all very well, he says, but he prefers the privacy of his own planet. Can you imagine that?"

"Frankly, no! I can't imagine the fourth dimension either. What a marvel, though!"

The conversation ended and the screen faded. Ted swung around to his wife. "Did you hear that?"

RAVELIN nodded; she had heard but not heeded. She was reading the menu supplied by the catering firm to which they subscribed. "We won't want anything heavy after that lunch. They've got simulated synthetic algae again."

Ted grunted. "It's never as good as the genuine synthetic."

"But it's cheaper and we've all had an enormous lunch."

"Don't worry about me, Mom!" sang Iugenae. "I'm going out with Runy."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where are you going, may I ask?"

"A ride around the world. We're catching the seven o'clock shuttle, so I've got to hurry."

"Come right home afterward," said Ravelin severely. "Don't go anywhere else."

"For heaven's sake, Mother, you'd think I was going to elope or something."

"Mind what I say, Miss Puss. I was a girl once myself. Have you taken your pill?"

"Yes, I've taken my pill."

Iugenae departed; Ted slipped back into the niche. "Who are you calling now?" asked Ravelin.

"Lamster Ullward. I want to thank him for going to so much trouble for us."

Ravelin agreed that an algae-and-magarine call was no more than polite.

Ted called, expressed his thanks, then — almost as an afterthought — chanced to mention the man who owned a planet.

"An entire planet?" inquired Ullward. "It must be inhabited."

"No, I understand not, Lamster Ullward. Think of it! Think of the privacy!"

"Privacy!" exclaimed Ullward bluffly. "My dear fellow, what do you call this?"

"Oh, naturally, Lamster Ullward — you have a real showplace."

"The planet must be very primigaging idea, of course — if you like that kind of thing. Who is this man?"

"I don't know, Lamster Ullward. I could find out, if you like."

"No, no, don't bother. I'm not particularly interested. Just an idle thought." Ullward laughed his hearty laugh. "Poor man. Probably lives in a dome."

"That's possible, of course, Lamster Ullward. Well, thanks again, and good night."

THE spaceman's name was Kennes Mail. He was short and thin, tough as synthetic herring, brown as toasted yeast. He had a close-cropped pad of gray hair, a keen, if ingenuous, blue gaze. He showed a courteous interest in Ullward's ranch, but Ullward thought his recurrent use of the word "clever" rather tactless.

As they returned to the house, Ullward paused to admire his oak tree.

"It's absolutely genuine, L[illegible] Mail! A living tree, survival [illegible] past ages! Do you have trees as fine as that on your planet?"

Kennes Mail smiled. "Lamster Ullward, that's just a shrub. Let's sit somewhere and I'll show you photographs."

Ullward had already mentioned his interest in acquiring extraterrestrial property; Mail, admitting that he needed money, had given

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to understand that some sort of deal might be arranged. They sat at a table; Mail opened his case. Ullward switched on the wall-screen.

"First I'll show you a map," said Mail. He selected a rod, dropped it into the table socket. On the wall appeared a world projection: oceans, an enormous equatorial land-mass named Gaea; the smaller sub-continents Atalanta, Persephone, Alcyone. A box of descriptive information read:

MAIL'S PLANET

Claim registered and endorsed at Extraterrestrial Properties Agency

Surface area:	.87 Earth normal
Gravity:	.93 Earth normal
Diurnal rotation:	22.15 Earth hours
Annual revolution:	2.97 Earth years
Atmosphere:	Invigorating
Climate:	Salubrious
Noxious conditions and influences:	None
Population:	1

Mail pointed to a spot on the eastern shore of Gaea. "I live here. Just got a rough camp at present. I need money to do a bit better for myself. I'm willing to lease off one of the smaller continents, or, if you prefer, a section of Gaea, say from Murky Mountains west to the ocean."

Ullward, with a cheerful smile, shook his head. "No sections for me, Lamster Mail. I want to buy the world outright. You set your price; if it's within reason, I'll write a check."

Mail glanced at him sidewise. "You haven't even seen the photographs."

"True." In a businesslike voice, Ullward said, "By all means, the photographs."

Mail touched the projection button. Landscapes of an unfamiliar wild beauty appeared on the screen. There were mountain crags and roaring rivers, snow-powdered forests, ocean dawns and prairie sunsets, green hillsides, meadows spattered with blossoms, beaches white as milk.

"Very pleasant," said Ullward. "Quite nice." He pulled out his checkbook. "What's your price?"

Mail chuckled and shook his head. "I won't sell. I'm willing to lease off a section—providing my price is met and my rules are agreed to."

ULLWARD sat with compressed lips. He gave his head a quick little jerk. Mail started to rise to his feet.

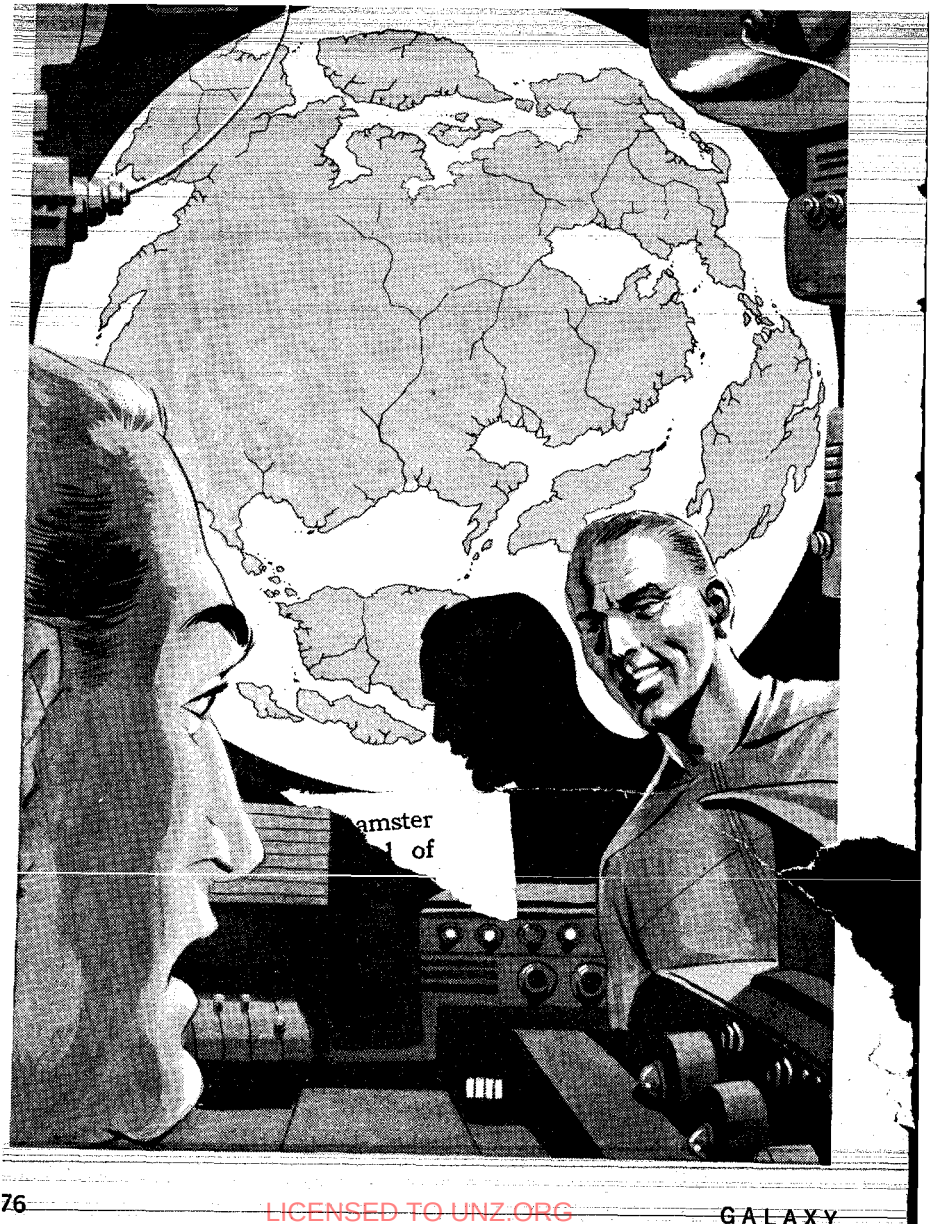
"No, no," said Ullward hastily. "I was merely thinking . . . Let's look at the map again."

Mail returned the map to the screen. Ullward made careful inspection of the various continents, inquired as to physiography, climate, flora and fauna.

Finally he made his decision. "I'll lease Gaea."

"No, Lamster Ullward!" declared Mail. "I'm reserving this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entire area — from Murky Mountains and the Calliope River east. This western section is open. It's maybe a little smaller than Atalanta or Persephone, but the climate is warmer."

"There aren't any mountains on the western section," Ullward protested. "Only these insignificant Rock Castle Crags."

"They're not so insignificant," said Mail. "You've also got the Purple Bird Hills, and down here in the south is Mount Cairasco — a live volcano. What more do you need?"

Ullward glanced across his ranch. "I'm in the habit of thinking big."

"West Gaea is a pretty big chunk of property."

"Very well," said Ullward. "What are your terms?"

"So far as money goes, I'm not greedy," Mail said. "For a twenty-year lease: two hundred thousand a year, the first five years in advance."

Ullward made a startled pro-te- Great guns, Lamster Mail! at's almost half my income!"

Mail shrugged. "I'm not trying to get rich. I want to build a lodge for myself. It costs money. If you can't afford it, I'll have to speak to someone who can."

Ullward said in a nettled voice, "I can afford it, certainly — but my entire ranch here cost less than a million."

"Well, either you want it or you don't," said Mail. "I'll tell you my rules, then you can make up your mind."

"What rules?" demanded Ullward, his face growing red.

"They're simple and their only purpose is to maintain privacy for both of us. First, you have to stay on your own property. No excursions hither and yon on my property. Second, no sub-leasing. Third, no residents except yourself, your family and your servants. I don't want any artists' colony springing up, nor any wild noisy resort atmosphere. Naturally you're entitled to bring out your guests, but they've got to keep to your property just like yourself."

He looked sidewise at Ullward's glum face. "I'm not trying to be tough, Lamster Ullward. Good fences make good neighbors, and it's better that we have the understanding now than hard words and beamgun evictions later."

"Let me see the photographs again," said Ullward. "Show me West Gaea."

He looked, heaved a deep sigh. "Very well. I agree."

THE construction crew had departed. Ullward was alone on West Gaea. He walked around the new lodge, taking deep breaths of pure quiet air, thrilling to the absolute solitude and privacy. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lodge had cost a fortune, but how many other people of Earth owned — leased, rather — anything to compare with this?

He walked out on the front terrace, gazed proudly across miles— — genuine unsimulated miles — of landscape. For his home site, he had selected a shelf in the foothills of the Ullward Range (as he had renamed the Purple Bird Hills). In front spread a great golden savannah dotted with blue-green trees; behind rose a tall gray cliff.

A stream rushed down a cleft in the rock, leaping, splashing, cooling the air, finally flowing into a beautiful clear pool, beside which Ullward had erected a cabana of red, green and brown plastic. At the base of the cliff and in crevices grew clumps of spiky blue cactus, lush green bushes covered with red trumpet-flowers, a thick-leafed white plant holding up a stalk clustered with white bubbles.

SOLITUDE! The real thing! No thumping of factories, no roar of traffic two feet from one's bed. One arm outstretched, the other pressed to his chest, Ullward performed a stately little jig of triumph on the terrace. Had he been able, he might have turned a cartwheel. When a person has complete privacy, absolutely nothing is forbidden!

Ullward took a final turn up and down the terrace, made a last appreciative survey of the horizon. The sun was sinking through banks of fire-fringed clouds. Marvelous depth of color, a tonal brilliance to be matched only in the very best illusion-panes!

He entered the lodge, made a selection from the nutrition locker. After a leisurely meal, he returned to the lounge. He stood thinking for a moment, then went out upon the terrace, strolled up and down. Wonderful! The night was full of stars, hanging like blurred white lamps, almost as he had always imagined them.

After ten minutes of admiring the stars, he returned into the lodge. Now what? The wall-screen, with its assortment of recorded programs. Snug and comfortable, Ullward watched the performance of a recent musical comedy.

Real luxury, he told himself. Pity he couldn't invite his friends out to spend the evening. Unfortunately impossible, considering the inconvenient duration of the trip between Mail's Pla[illegible]t and Earth. However — only t[illegible]ays until the arrival of his f[illegible]t. She was Elf Intry, a you[illegible] woman who had been more than friendly with Ullward on Earth. When Elf arrived, Ullward would broach a subject which he had been mulling over for several months — indeed, ever since he had first learned of Mail's Planet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELF Intry arrived early in the afternoon, coming down to Mail's Planet in a capsule discharged from the weekly Outer Ring Express packet. A woman of normally good disposition, she greeted Ullward in a seethe of indignation. "Just *who* is *that* brute around the other side of the planet? I thought you had absolute privacy here!"

"That's just old Mail," said Ullward evasively. "What's wrong?"

"The fool on the packet set me the wrong coordinates and the capsule came down on a beach. I noticed a house and then I saw a naked man jumping rope behind some bushes. I thought it was you, of course. I went over and said 'Boo!' You should have *heard* the language he used!" She shook her head. "I don't see why you allow such a boor on your planet."

The buzzer on the communication screen sounded. "That's Mail now," said Ullward. "You wait here. I'll tell him how to speak to *my* guests!"

He presently returned to the terrace. Elf came over to him, kissed his nose. "Ully, you're pale with rage! I hope you didn't lose your temper."

"No," said Ullward. "We merely — well, we had an understanding. Come along, look over the property."

He took Elf around to the back, pointing out the swimming pool, the waterfall, the mass of rock above. "You won't see that effect on any illusion-pane! That's genuine rock!"

"Lovely, Ully. Very nice. The color might be just a trifle darker, though. Rock doesn't look like that."

"No?" Ullward inspected the cliff more critically. "Well, I can't do anything about it. How about the privacy?"

"Wonderful! It's so quiet, it's almost eerie!"

"Eerie?" Ullward looked around the landscape. "It hadn't occurred to me."

"You're not sensitive to these things, Ully. Still, it's very nice, if you can tolerate that unpleasant creature Mail so close."

"Close?" protested Ullward. "He's on the other side of the continent!"

"True," said Elf. "It's all relative, I suppose. How long do you expect to stay out here?"

"That depends. Come along inside. I want to talk with you."

He seated her in a comfortable chair, brought her a globe of Gluco-Fructoid Nectar. For himself, he mixed ethyl alcohol, water, a few drops of Haig's Oldtime Esters.

"Elf, where do you stand in the reproduction list?"

She raised her fine eyebrows, shook her head. "So far down, I've lost count. Fifty or sixty billion."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm down thirty-seven billion. It's one reason I bought this place. Waiting list, piffle! Nobody stops Bruham Ullward's breeding on his own planet!"

Elf pursed her lips, shook her head sadly. "It won't work, Ully."

"And why not?"

"You can't take the children back to Earth. The list would keep them out."

"True, but think of living here, surrounded by children. All the children you wanted! And utter privacy to boot! What more could you ask for?"

Elf sighed. "You fabricate a beautiful illusion-pane, Ully. But I think not. I love the privacy and solitude — but I thought there'd be more people to be private from."

THE Outer Ring Express packet came past four days later. Elf kissed Ullward good-by. "It's simply exquisite here, Ully. The solitude is so magnificent, it gives me gooseflesh. I've had a wonderful visit." She climbed into the capsule. "See you on Earth."

"Just a minute," said Ullward suddenly. "I want you to post a letter or two for me."

"Hurry. I've only got twenty minutes."

Ullward was back in ten minutes. "Invitations," he told her breathlessly. "Friends."

"Right." She kissed his nose. "Good-by, Ully." She slammed the port; the capsule rushed away, whirling up to meet the packet.

The new guests arrived three weeks later: Frobisher Worbeck, Liornetta Stobart, Harris and Hyla Cabe, Ted and Ravelin and Iugenae Seehoe, Juvenal Aquister and his son Runy.

Ullward, brown from long days of lazing in the sun, greeted them with great enthusiasm. "Welcome to my little retreat! Wonderful to see you all! Frobisher, you pink-cheeked rascal! And Iugenae! Prettier than ever! Be careful, Ravelin — I've got my eye on your daughter! But Runy's here, guess I'm out of the picture! Liornetta, damned glad you could make it! And Ted! Great to see you, old chap! This is all your doing, you know! Harris, Hyla, Juvenal — come on up! We'll have a drink, a drink, a drink!"

Running from one to the other, patting arms, herding the slow-moving Frobisher Worbeck, he conducted his guests up the slope to the terrace. Here they turned to survey the panorama. Ullward listened to their remarks, mouth pursed against a grin of gratification.

"Magnificent!"

"Grand!"

"Absolutely genuine!"

"The sky is so far away, it frightens me!"

"The sunlight's so pure!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The genuine thing's always best, isn't it?"

Runy said a trifle wistfully, "I thought you were on a beach, Lamster Ullward."

"Beach? This is mountain country, Runy. Land of the wide open spaces! Look out over that plain!"

Liornetta Stobart patted Runy's shoulder. "Not every planet has beaches, Runy. The secret of happiness is to be content with what one has."

ULLWARD laughed gayly. "Oh, I've got beaches, never fear for that! There's a fine beach — ha, ha — five hundred miles due west. Every step Ullward domain!"

"Can we go?" asked Iugenae excitedly. "Can we go, Lamster Ullward?"

"We certainly can! That shed down the slope is headquarters for the Ullward Airlines. We'll fly to the beach, swim in Ullward Ocean! But now refreshment! After that crowded capsule, your throats must be like paper!"

"It wasn't too crowded," said Ravelin Seehoe. "There were only nine of us." She looked critically up at the cliff. "If that were an illusion-pane, I'd consider it grotesque."

"My dear Ravelin!" cried Ullward. "It's impressive! Magnificent!"

"All of that," agreed Frobisher Worbeck, a tall sturdy man, white-haired, red-jowled, with a blue benevolent gaze. "And now, Bruham, what about those drinks?"

"Of course! Ted, I know you of old. Will you tend bar? Here's the alcohol, here's water, here are the esters. Now, you two," Ullward called to Runy and Iugenae. "How about some nice cold soda pop?"

"What kind is there?" asked Runy.

"All kinds, all flavors. This is Ullward's Retreat! We've got methylamyl glutamine, cycloprodacterol phosphate, metathiobromine-4-glycocitrose . . ."

Runy and Iugenae expressed their preferences; Ullward brought the globes, then hurried to arrange tables and chairs for the adults. Presently everyone was comfortable and relaxed.

Iugenae whispered to Ravelin, who smiled and nodded indulgently. "Lamster Ullward, you remember the beautiful oak leaf you gave Iugenae?"

"Of course I do."

"It's still as fresh and green as ever. I wonder if Iugenae might have a leaf or two from some of these other trees?"

"My dear Ravelin!" Ullward roared with laughter. "She can have an entire tree!"

"Oh, Mother! Can—"

"Iugenae, don't be ridiculous!" snapped Ted. "How could we get it home? Where would we plant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the thing? In the bathroom?"

Ravelin said, "You and Runy find some nice leaves, but don't wander too far."

"No, Mother." She beckoned to Runy. "Come along, dope. Bring a basket."

THE others of the party gazed out over the plain. "A beautiful view, Ullward," said Frobisher Worbeck. "How far does your property extend?"

"Five hundred miles west to the ocean, six hundred miles east to the mountains, eleven hundred miles north and two hundred miles south."

Worbeck shook his head solemnly. "Nice. A pity you couldn't get the whole planet. Then you'd have real privacy!"

"I tried, of course," said Ullward. "The owner refused to consider the idea."

"A pity."

Ullward brought out a map. "However, as you see, I have a fine volcano, a number of excellent rivers, a mountain range, and down here on the delta of Cinnamon River an absolutely miasmic swamp."

Ravelin pointed to the ocean. "Why, it's Lonesome Ocean! I thought the name was Ullward Ocean."

Ullward laughed uncomfortably. "Just a figure of speech — so to speak. My rights extend ten miles. More than enough for swimming purposes."

"No freedom of the seas here, eh, Lamster Ullward?" laughed Harris Cabe.

"Not exactly," confessed Ullward.

"A pity," said Frobisher Worbeck.

Hyla Cabe pointed to the map. "Look at these wonderful mountain ranges! The Magnificent Mountains! And over here — the Elysian Gardens! I'd love to see them, Lamster Ullward."

Ullward shook his head in embarrassment. "Impossible, I'm afraid. They're not on my property. I haven't even seen them myself."

His guests stared at him in astonishment. "But surely—"

"It's an atom-welded contract with Lamster Mail," Ullward explained. "He stays on his property, I stay on mine. In this way, our privacy is secure."

"Look," Hyla Cabe said aside to Ravelin. "The Unimaginable Caverns! Doesn't it make you sad [illegible]ild not to be able to see them?"

Aquister said hurriedly, "It's a pleasure to sit here and just breathe this wonderful fresh air. No noise, no crowds, no bustle or hurry . . ."

The party drank and chatted and basked in the sunshine until late afternoon. Enlisting the aid

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Ravelin Seehoe and Hyla Cabe, Ullward set out a simple meal of yeast pellets, processed protein, thick slices of algae crunch.

"No animal flesh, cooked vegetation?" questioned Worbeck curiously.

"Tried them the first day," said Ullward. "Revolting. Sick for a week."

After dinner, the guests watched a comic melodrama on the wall-screen. Then Ullward showed them to their various cubicles, and after a few minutes of badinage and calling back and forth, the lodge became quiet.

NEXT day, Ullward ordered his guests into their bathing suits. "We're off to the beach, we'll gambol on the sand, we'll frolic in the surf of Lonesome Ullward Ocean!"

The guests piled happily into the air-car. Ullward counted heads. "All aboard! We're off!"

They rose and flew west, first low over the plain, then high into the air, to obtain a panoramic view of the Rock Castle Crags.

"The tallest peak — there to the north — is almost ten thousand feet high. Notice how it juts up, just imagine the mass! Solid rock! How'd you like that dropped on your toe, Runy? Not so good, eh? In a moment, we'll see a precipice over a thousand feet straight up and down. There — now! Isn't that remarkable?"

"Certainly impressive," agreed Ted.

"What those Magnificent Mountains must be like!" said Harris Cabe with a wry laugh.

"How tall are they, Lamster Ullward?" inquired Liornetta Stobart.

"What? Which?"

"The Magnificent Mountains."

"I don't know for sure. Thirty or forty thousand feet, I suppose."

"What a marvelous sight they must be!" said Frobisher Worbeck. "Probably make these look like foothills."

"These are beautiful too," Hyla Cabe put in hastily.

"Oh, naturally," said Frobisher Worbeck. "A damned fine sight! You're a lucky man, Bruham!"

Ullward laughed shortly, turned the air-car west. They flew across a rolling forested plain and presently Lonesome Ocean gleamed in the distance. Ullward slanted down, landed the air-car on the beach, and the party alighted.

The day was warm, the sun hot. A fresh wind blew in from the ocean. The surf broke upon the sand in massive roaring billows.

The party stood appraising the scene. Ullward swung his arms. "Well, who's for it? Don't wait to be invited! We've got the whole ocean to ourselves!"

Ravelin said, "It's so rough! Look how that water crashes down!"

Liornetta Stobart turned away

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

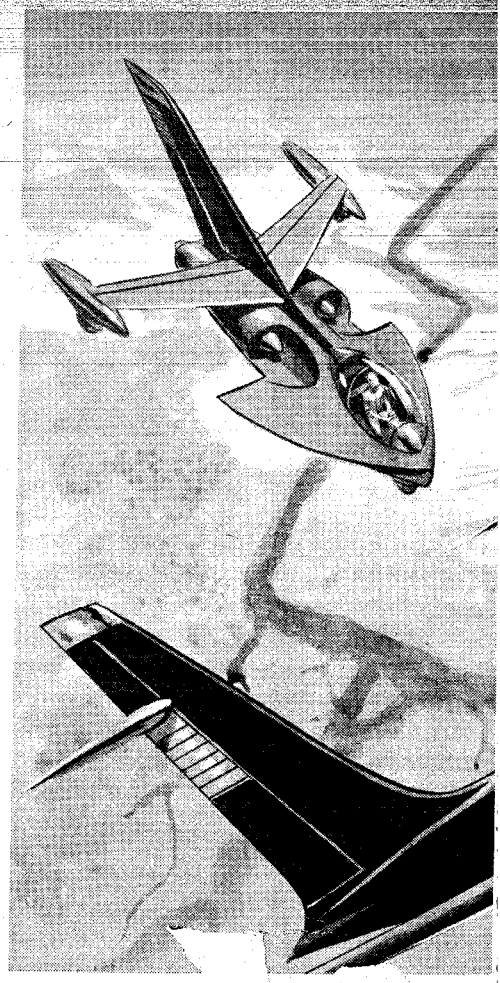
with a shake of her head. "Illusion-pane surf is always so gentle. This could lift you right up and give you a good shaking!"

"I expected nothing quite so vehement," Harris Cabe admitted.

Ravelin beckoned to Iugenae. "You keep well away, Miss Puss. I don't want you swept out to sea. You'd find it Lonesome Ocean indeed!"

Runy approached the water, waded gingerly into a sheet of retreating foam. A comber thrashed down at him and he danced quickly back up the shore.

"The water's cold," he reported.



ULLWARD poised himself. "Well, here goes! I'll show you how it's done!" He trotted forward, stopped short, then flung himself into the face of a great white comber.

The party on the beach watched.

"Where is he?" asked Hyla Cabe.

Iugenae pointed. "I saw part of him out there. A leg, or an arm."

"There he is!" cried Ted. "Woof! Another one's caught him. I suppose some people might consider it sport . . ."

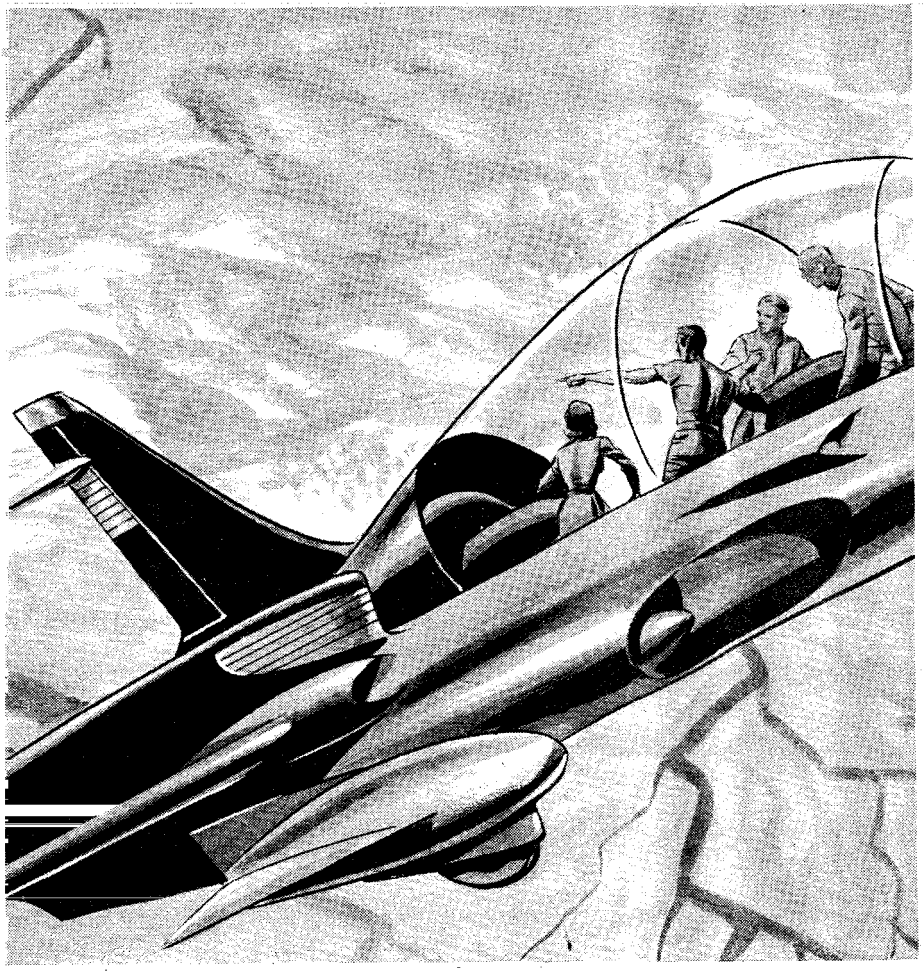
Ullward staggered to his feet, lurched through the retreating wash to shore. "Hah! Great! Invigorating! Ted! Harris! Juvenal! Take a go at it!"

Harris shook his head. "I don't think I'll try it today, Bruham."

"The next time for me too," said Juvenal Aquister. "Perhaps it won't be so rough."

"But don't let us stop you!" urged Ted. "You swim as long as you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



like. We'll wait here for you."

"Oh, I've had enough for now," said Ullward. "Excuse me while I change."

When Ullward returned, he found his guests seated in the air-car. "Hello! Everyone ready to go?"

"It's hot in the sun," explained Liornetta, "and we thought we'd enjoy the view better from inside."

"When you look through the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glass, it's almost like an illusion-pane," said Iugenae.

"Oh, I see. Well, perhaps you're ready to visit other parts of the Ullward domain?"

The proposal met with approval; Ullward took the air-car into the air. "We can fly north over the pine woods, south over Mount Cairasco, which unfortunately isn't erupting just now."

"Anywhere you like, Lamster Ullward," said Frobisher Worbeck. "No doubt it's all beautiful."

Ullward considered the varied attractions of his leasehold. "Well, first to the Cinnamon Swamp."

For two hours they flew, over the swamp, across the smoking crater of Mount Cairasco, east to the edge of Murky Mountains, along Calliope River to its source in Goldenleaf Lake. Ullward pointed out noteworthy views, interesting aspects. Behind him, the murmurs of admiration dwindled and finally died.

"Had enough?" Ullward called back gayly. "Can't see half a continent in one day! Shall we save some for tomorrow?"

THERE was a moment's stillness. Then Liornetta Stobart said, "Lamster Ullward, we're simply dying for a peek at the Magnificent Mountains. I wonder — do you think we could slip over for a quick look? I'm sure Lamster Mail wouldn't really mind."

Ullward shook his head with a rather stiff smile. "He's made me agree to a very definite set of rules. I've already had one brush with him."

"How could he possibly find out?" asked Juvenal Aquister.

"He probably wouldn't find out," said Ullward, "but—"

"It's a damned shame for him to lock you off into this drab little peninsula!" Frobisher Worbeck said indignantly.

"Please, Lamster Ullward," Iugenae wheedled.

"Oh, very well," Ullward said recklessly.

He turned the air-car east. The Murky Mountains passed below. The party peered from the windows, exclaiming at the marvels of the forbidden landscape.

"How far are the Magnificent Mountains?" asked Ted.

"Not far. Another thousand miles."

"Why are you hugging the ground?" asked Frobisher Worbeck. "Up in the air, man! Let's see the countryside!"

Ullward hesitated. Mail was probably asleep. And, in the last analysis, he really had no right to forbid an innocent little—

"Lamster Ullward," called Runy, "there's an air-car right behind us."

The air-car drew up level. Kennes Mail's blue eyes met Ullward's across the gap. He motioned Ullward down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ullward compressed his mouth, swung the air-car down. From behind him came murmurs of sympathy and outrage.

Below was a dark pine forest; Ullward set down in a pretty little glade. Mail landed nearby, jumped to the ground, signaled to Ullward. The two men walked to the side. The guests murmured together and shook their heads.

Ullward presently returned to the air-car. "Everybody please get in," he said crisply.

They rose into the air and flew west. "What did the chap have to say for himself?" queried Worbeck.

Ullward chewed at his lips. "Not too much. Wanted to know if I'd lost the way. I told him one or two things. Reached an understanding . . ." His voice dwindled, then rose in a burst of cheerfulness. "We'll have a party back at the lodge. What do we care for Mail and his confounded mountains?"

"That's the spirit, Bruham!" cried Frobisher Worbeck.

BOTH Ted and Ullward tended bar during the evening. Either e or the other mingled rather more alcohol to rather less esters into the drinks than standard practice recommended. As a result, the party became quite loud and gay. Ullward damned Mail's interfering habits; Worbeck explored six thousand years of common law in an effort to prove Mail a domineering tyrant; the women giggled; Iugenae and Runy watched cynically, then presently went off to attend to their own affairs.

In the morning, the group slept late. Ullward finally tottered out on the terrace, to be joined one at a time by the others. Runy and Iugenae were missing.

"Young rascals," groaned Worbeck. "If they're lost, they'll have to find their own way back. No search parties for me."

At noon, Runy and Iugenae returned in Ullward's air-car.

"Good heavens," shrieked Ravelin. "Iugenae, come here this instant! Where have you been?"

Juvenal Aquister surveyed Runy sternly. "Have you lost your mind, taking Lamster Ullward's air-car without his permission?"

"I asked him last night," Runy declared indignantly. "He said yes, take anything except the volcano because that's where he slept when his feet got cold, and the swamp because that's where he dropped his empty containers."

"Regardless," said Juvenal in disgust, "you should have had better sense. Where have you been?"

Runy fidgeted. Iugenae said, "Well, we went south for a while, then turned and went east — I think it was east. We thought if we flew low, Lamster Mail wouldn't see us. So we flew low,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the mountains, and pretty soon we came to an ocean. We went along the beach and came to a house. We landed to see who lived there, but nobody was home."

Ullward stifled a groan.

"What would anyone want with a pen of birds?" asked Runy.

"Birds? What birds? Where?"

"At the house. There was a pen with a lot of big birds, but they kind of got loose while we were looking at them and all flew away."

"Anyway," Iugenae continued briskly, "we decided it was Lamster Mail's house, so we wrote a note, telling what everybody thinks of him and pinned it to his door."

Ullward rubbed his forehead. "Is that all?"

"Well, practically all." Iugenae became diffident. She looked at Runy and the two of them giggled nervously.

"There's more?" yelled Ullward. "What, in heaven's name?"

"Nothing very much," said Iugenae, following a crack in the terrace with her toe. "We put a booby-trap over the door—just a bucket of water. Then we came home."

The screen buzzer sounded from inside the lodge. Everybody looked at Ullward. Ullward heaved a deep sigh, rose to his feet, went inside.

THAT very afternoon, the Outer Ring Express packet was due to pass the junction point. Frobisher Worbeck felt sudden and acute qualms of conscience for the neglect his business suffered while he dawdled away hours in idle enjoyment.

"But my dear old chap!" exclaimed Ullward. "Relaxation is good for you!"

True, agreed Frobisher Worbeck, if one could make himself oblivious to the possibility of fiasco through the carelessness of underlings. Much as he deplored the necessity, in spite of his inclination to loiter for weeks, he felt impelled to leave — and not a minute later than that very afternoon.

Others of the group likewise remembered important business which they had to see to, and those remaining felt it would be a shame and an imposition to send up the capsule half-empty and likewise decided to return.

Ullward's arguments met unyielding walls of obstinacy. Rather glumly, he went down to the capsule to bid his guests farewell. As they climbed through the port, they expressed their parting thanks:

"Bruham, it's been absolutely marvelous!"

"You'll never know how we've enjoyed this outing, Lamster Ullward!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The air, the space, the privacy — I'll never forget!"

"It was the most, to say the least."

The port thumped into its socket. Ullward stood back, waving rather uncertainly.

Ted Seehoe reached to press the Active button. Ullward sprang forward, pounded on the port.

"Wait!" he bellowed. "A few things I've got to attend to! I'm coming with you!"

"COME in, come in," said Ullward heartily, opening the door to three of his friends: Coble and his wife Heulia Sansom, and Coble's young, pretty cousin Landine. "Glad to see you!"

"And we're glad to come! We've heard so much of your wonderful ranch, we've been on pins and needles all day!"

"Oh, come now! It's not so marvelous as all that!"

"Not to you, perhaps—you live here!"

Ullward smiled. "Well, I must say I live here and still like it. Would you like to have lunch, or perhaps you'd prefer to walk around for a few minutes? I've just finished making a few changes, but I'm happy to say everything is in order."

"Can we just take a look?"

"Of course. Come over here. Stand just so. Now — are you ready?

"Ready."

Ullward snapped the wall back.

"Ooh!" breathed Landine. "Isn't it beautiful!"

"The space, the open feeling!"

"Look, a tree! What a wonderful simulation!"

"That's no simulation," said Ullward. "That's a genuine tree!"

"Lamster Ullward, are you telling the truth?"

"I certainly am. I never tell lies to a lovely young lady. Come along, over this way."

"Lamster Ullward, that cliff is so convincing, it frightens me."

Ullward grinned. "It's a good job." He signaled a halt. "Now—turn around."

The group turned. They looked out across a great golden savannah, dotted with groves of blue-green trees. A rustic lodge commanded the view, the door being the opening into Ullward's living room.

The group stood in silent admiration. Then Heulia sighed. "Space. Pure space."

"I'd swear I was looking miles," said Coble.

Ullward smiled, a trifle wistfully. "Glad you like my little retreat. Now what about lunch? Genuine algae!"

—JACK VANCE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Number of the Beast

By FRITZ LEIBER

He had to get the criminal's number—but the wrong number meant his own number was up!

Illustrated by MARTINEZ

"I WISH," said the Young Captain, police chief of High Chicago, the turbulent satellite that hangs over the meridian of the midwestern groundside city, "I wish that sometimes the telepathic races of the Galaxy weren't such consistent truth-tellers and silence-keepers."

"Your four suspects are all telepaths?" the Old Lieutenant asked.

"Yes. I also wish I had more than half an hour to decide which one to accuse. But Earthside has muscled into the case and the pressure is on. If I can't reason it out, I must make a guess. A bare half-hour they give me."

"Then perhaps you shouldn't waste it with a pensioned-off old louey."

The Young Captain shook his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

head decisively. "No. You think. You have time to now."

The Old Lieutenant smiled. "Sometimes I wish I hadn't. And I doubt if I can give you any special angles on telepaths, Jim. It's true I've lately been whiling away the time on informal study of alien thought systems with Khla-Khla the Martian, but—"

"I didn't come to you looking for a specialist on telepathy," the Young Captain asserted sharply.

"Very well then, Jim. You know what you're doing. Let's hear your case. And give me background. I don't keep up with the news."

THE Young Captain looked skeptical. "Everyone in High Chicago has heard about the murder — not two furlongs from here — of the representative of the Arcturian peace party."

"I haven't," the Old Lieutenant said. "Who are the Arcturians? I tell you, for an oldster like me, the Now is just one more historical period. Better consult someone else, Jim."

"No. The Arcturians are the first non-related humanoid race to turn up in the Galaxy. Non-related to Earth humans, that is. True, they have three eyes, and six fingers on each hand, but they are hairless mammalian bipeds just the same. One of their females is the current burlesque sensation of the Star and Garter."

"The police found that a good spot to keep their eyes on in my day too," the Old Lieutenant recalled, nodding. "Are the Arcturians telepaths?"

"No. I'll come to the telepathy angle later. The Arcturians are split into two parties: those who want to enter the Commerce Union and open their planets to alien starships, including Earth's — the peace party, in short — and those who favor a policy of strict non-intercourse which, as far as we know, always ultimately leads to war. The war party is rather the stronger of the two. Any event may tip the balance."

"Such as a representative of the peace party coming quietly to Earth and getting himself bumped before he even gets down from High Chicago?"

"Exactly. It looks bad, Sean. It looks as if *we* wanted war. The other member peoples of the Commerce Union are skeptical enough already about the ultimate peacefulness of Earth's intentions toward the whole Galaxy. They look on the Arcturian situation as a test. They say that we accepted the Polarians and Antareans and all the rest as equals simply because they *are* so different from us in form and culture — it's easy to admit theoretical equality with a bumblebee, say, and then perhaps do him dirt afterward.

"But, our galactic critics ask, will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Earthmen be so ready or willing to admit equality with a humanoid race? It's sometimes harder, you know, to agree that your own brother is a human being than to grant the title to an anonymous peasant on the other side of the globe. They say — I continue to speak for our galactic critics — that Earthmen will openly work for peace with Arcturus while secretly sabotaging it."

"Including murder."

"Right, Sean. So unless we can pin this crime on aliens — best of all on extremists in the Arcturian war party (something I believe but can in no way prove) — the rumor will go through the Union that Earth wants war, while the Arcturian Earth-haters will have everything their own way."

"Leave off the background, Jim. How was the murder done?"

PERMITTING himself a bitter smile, the Young Captain said wistfully, "With the whole Galaxy for a poison cabinet and a weapon shop, with almost every means available of subtle disguise, of sudden approach and instantaneous getaway — everything but time machine, and some crook will come along with that any day now — the murder had to be done with a blunt instrument and by one of four aliens domiciled in the same caravansary as the Arcturian peace-party man.

"There's something very ugly, don't you think, in the vision of a blackjack gripped by the tentacle of an octopoid or in the pinchers of a black Martian? To be frank, Sean, I'd rather the killer had been fancier in his *modus operandi.* It would have let me dump the heavy end of the case in the laps of the science boys."

"I was always grateful myself when I could invoke the physicists," the Old Lieutenant agreed. "It's marvelous what colored lights and the crackle of Geiger counters do to take the pressure off a plain policeman. These four aliens you mention are the telepaths?"

"Right, Sean. Shady characters, too, all four of them, criminals for hire, which makes it harder. And each of them takes the typical telepath point of view — Almighty, how it exasperates me! — that we ought to *know* which one of them is guilty without asking questions! They know well enough that Earthmen aren't telepathic, but still they hide behind the lofty pretense that every intelligent inhabitant of the Cosmos *must be* telepathic.

"If you come right out and tell them that your mind is absolutely deaf-dumb-and-blind to the thoughts of others, they act as if you'd made a dreadful social blunder and they cover up for you by pretending not to have heard you. Talk about patronizing—! Why, they're like a woman who is for-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever expecting you to know what it is she's angry about without ever giving you a hint what it is. They're like—"

"Now, now, I've dealt with a few telepaths in my time, Jim. I take it that the other prong of your dilemma is that if you officially accuse one of them, *and you hit it right,* then he will up and confess like a good little animal, using the ritual of speech to tell you who commissioned the murder and all the rest of it, and everything will be rosy.

"But *if you hit it wrong,* it will be a mortal insult to his whole race — to all telepaths, for that matter — and there will be whole solar systems moving to resign from the Union and all manner of other devils to pay. Because, continuing the telepath's fiction that you are a telepath yourself, you must have known he was innocent and yet you accused him."

"MOST right, Sean," the Young Captain admitted ruefully. "As I said at the beginning, truth-tellers and silence-keepers—intellectual prigs, all of them! Refusing to betray each others' thoughts to a non-telepath, I can understand that — though just one telepathic stoolpigeon would make police work ten mountains easier. But all these other lofty idealistic fictions do get my goat! If I were running the Union—"

"Jim, your time is running short. I take it you want help in deciding which one to accuse. That is, if you *do* decide to chance it rather than shut your mouth, lose face and play for time."

"I've got to chance it, Sean — Earthside demands it. But as things stand, I'll be backing no better than a three-to-one shot. For you see, Sean, every single suspect of the four is just as suspect as the others. In my book, they're four equally bad boys."

"Sketch me your suspects then, quickly." The Old Lieutenant closed his eyes.

"There's Tlik-Tcha the Martian," the Young Captain began, ticking them off on his fingers. "A nasty black beetle, that one. Held his breath for twenty minutes and then belched it in my face. Kept printing 'No Comment' white-on-black on his chest to whatever I asked him. In Garamond type!"

"Cheer up, Jim. It might have been Rustic Capitals. Next."

"Hlilav the Antarean multibrach. Kept gently waving his tentacles all through the interrogation — I thought he was trying to hypnotize me! Then it occurred to me he might be talking in code, but the interpreter said no. At the end, he gives a long insulting whistle, like some shameless swish. Whistle didn't signify anything either, the interpreter said, beyond a polite wish for my serenity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Third customer was Fa the Rigelian composite. Took off a limb — real, of course, not artificial — and kept fiddling with it while I shot questions at him. I could hardly keep my mind on what I was saying — expected him to take his head off next! He did that too, just as he started back to his cell."

"TELEPATHS can surely be exasperating," the Old Lieutenant agreed. "I always had great trouble in keeping in mind what a boring business a vocal interview must be to them — very much as if a man, quite capable of speech, should insist on using pencil and paper to conduct a conversation with you, with perhaps the further proviso that you print your remarks stylishly. Your fourth suspect, Jim?"

"Hrohrakak the Polarian centipedal. He reared up in a great question-mark bend when I addressed him — looked very much like a giant cobra covered with thick black fur. Kept chattering to himself too, very low — interpreter said he was saying over and over again, 'Oh, All-father, when will this burden be lifted from me?' Halfway through, he reaches out a little black limb to Donovan to give him what looks like a pretty pink billiard ball."

"Oh, naughty, naughty," the Old Lieutenant observed, shaking his head while he smiled. "So these are your four suspects, Jim? The four rather gaudy racehorses of whom you must back one?"

"They are. Each of them had opportunity. Each of them has a criminal reputation and might well have been hired to do the murder — either by extremists in the Arcturian war party or by some other alien organization hostile to Earth — such as the League of the Beasts with its pseudo-religious mumbo-jumbo."

"I don't agree with you about the League, but don't forget our own bloody-minded extremists," the Old Lieutenant reminded him. "There are devils among us too, Jim."

"True, Sean. But whoever paid for this crime, any one of the four might have been his agent. For to complete the problem and tie it up in a Gordian knot a yard thick, each one of my suspects has recently and untraceably received a large sum of money — enough so that, in each case, it might well have paid for murder."

LEANING forward, the Old Lieutenant said, "So? Tell me about that, Jim."

"Well, you know the saying that the price of a being's life anywhere in the Galaxy is one thousand of whatever happens to be the going unit of big money. And, as you know, it's not too bad a rule of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thumb. In this case, the unit is gold martians, which are neither gold nor backed by Mars's bitter little bureaucracy, but—"

"I know! You've only minutes left, Jim. What were the exact amounts?"

"Hlilav the Antarean multibrach had received 1024 gold martians, Hrohrakak the Polarian centipedal 1000 gold martians, Fa the Rigelian composite 1728 gold martians, Tlik-Tcha the Martian coleopteroid 666 gold martians."

"Ah—" the Old Lieutenant said very softly. "The number of the beast."

"Come again, Sean?"

"'Here is wisdom,'" quoted the Old Lieutenant, still speaking very softly. "'Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man'; *Revelation* chapter thirteen, verse eighteen. *Revelation*, Jim, the last book in the Bible."

"I know that," the Young Captain burst out excitedly. "I also know the next words, if only because they're a favorite with numerology crackpots — of whom I see quite a few at the station. The next words are: 'and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.' Almighty, that's Tlik-Tcha's—that's the number of his gold martians! And we've always known that the League of the Beasts got some of its mumbo-jumbo from Earth, so why not from its Bible? Sean, you clever old devil, I'm going to play your hunch." The Young Captain sprang up. "I'm going back to the station and have the four of them in and accuse Tlik-Tcha to his face."

The Old Lieutenant lifted a hand. "One moment, Jim," he said sharply. "You're to go back to the station, to be sure, and have the four of them in, yes — but you're to accuse Fa the Rigelian."

The Young Captain almost sat down again, involuntarily. "But that doesn't make sense, Sean," he protested. "Fa's number is 1728. That doesn't fit your clue. It's not the number of the beast."

"Beasts have all sorts of numbers, Jim," the Old Lieutenant said. "The one you want is 1728."

"But your reason, Sean? Give me your reason."

"No. There's no time and you mightn't believe me if I did. You asked for my advice and I've given it to you. Accuse Fa the Rigelian."

"But—"

"That's all, Jim."

MINUTES later, the Young Captain was still feeling the slow burn of his exasperation, though he was back at the station and the moment of decision weighed sickeningly upon him. What a fool he'd been, he told himself savagely, to waste his time on such an old dodderer! The nerve of the man, giving out with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

advice — orders, practically! — that he refused to justify, behaving with the whimsicality, the stubbornness — yes, the insolence! — that only the retired man can afford.

He scanned the four alien faces confronting him across the station desk — Tlik-Tcha's like a section of ebon bowling ball down to the three deeply recessed perceptors, Hrohrakak's a large black floor-mop faintly quivering, Fa's pale and humanoid, but oversize, like an emperor's death mask, Hlilav's a cluster of serially blinking eyes and greenish jowls. He wished he could toss them all in a bag and reach in — wearing an armor-plated glove — and pick one.

The room stank of disinfectants and unwashed alienity — the familiar reek of the oldtime police station greatly diversified. The Young Captain felt the sweat trickling down his flushed forehead. He opened wide the louvre behind him and the hum of the satellite's central concourse poured in. It didn't help the atmosphere, but for a moment he felt less constricted.

Then he scanned the four faces once more and the deadline desperation was back upon him. *Pick a number,* he thought, *any number from one to two thousand. Grab a face. Trust to luck. Sean's a stubborn old fool, but the boys always said he had the damnedest luck . . .*

His finger stabbed out. "In the nexus of these assembled minds," he said loudly, "I publish the truth I share with yours, Fa—"

That was all he had time to get out. At his first movement, the Rigelian sprang up, whipped off his head and hurled it straight toward the center of the open louvre.

But if the Young Captain had been unready for thought, he was more than keyed up for action. He snagged the head as it shot past, though he fell off his chair in doing it. The teeth snapped once, futilely. Then a tiny voice from the head spoke the words he'd been praying for: "Let the truth that our minds share be published forth. But first, please, take me back to my breath source . . ."

NEXT day, the Old Lieutenant and the Young Captain talked it all over.

"So you didn't nab Fa's accomplices in the concourse?" the Old Lieutenant asked.

"No, Sean, they got clean away — as they very likely would have, with Fa's head, if they'd managed to lay their hands on it. Fa wouldn't rat on them."

"But otherwise our fancy-boy killer confessed in full? Told the whole story, named his employers, and provided the necessary evidence to nail them and himself once and for all?"

"He did indeed. When one of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those telepath characters does talk, it's a positive pleasure to hear him. He makes it artistic, like an oration from Shakespeare. But now, sir, I want to ask the question you said you didn't have time to answer yesterday — though I'll admit I'm asking it with a little different meaning than when I asked it first. You gave me a big shock then and I'll admit that I'd never have gone along and followed your advice blind the way I did, except that I had nothing else to go on, and I *was* impressed with that Bible quotation you had so pat — until you told me it didn't mean what it seemed to!

"But I *did* follow your advice, and it got me out of one of the worst jams I've ever been in — with a pat on the back from Earthside to boot! So now let me ask you, Sean, in the name of all that's holy, how did you know so surely which one of the four it was?"

"I didn't know, Jim. It's more accurate to say I guessed."

"YOU old four-flusher! Do you mean to say you just played a lucky hunch?"

"Not quite, Jim. It was a guess, all right, but an educated guess. It all lay in the numbers, of course, the numbers of gold martians, the numbers of our four beasts. Tlik-Tcha's 666 did strongly indicate that he was in the employ of the League of the Beasts, for I understand they are great ones on symbolic actions and like to ring in the number 666 whenever they can. But that gets us just nowhere — the League, though highly critical of most Earthmen, has never shown itself desirous of fomenting interstellar war.

"Hrohrakak's 1000 would indicate that he was receiving money from some organization of Earthmen, or from some alien source that happens also to use the decimal system. *Anyone* operating around Sol would be apt to use the decimal system. Hrohrakak's 1000 points in no one direction.

"Now as to Hlilav's 1024 — that number is the tenth power of two. As far as I know, no natural species of being uses the binary system. However, it is the rule with robots. The indications are that Hlilav is working for the Interstellar Brotherhood of Free Business Machines or some like organization, and, as we both know, the robots are not ones to pound the war drums or touch off the war fuses, for they are always the chief sufferers.

"That leaves Fa's 1728. Jim, the first thing you told me about the Arcturians was that they were hexadactylic bipeds. Six fingers on one hand means 12 on two — and almost a mortal certainty that the beings so equipped by nature will be using the duodecimal system, in many ways the most convenient

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of all. In the duodecimal system, 'one thousand' is not 10 times 10 times 10, but 12 times 12 times 12 — which comes out as 1728 exactly in our decimal system.

"As you said, 'one thousand' of the going unit is the price of a being's life. Someone paid 'one thousand' gold martians by an Arcturian would have 1728 in his pocket according to our count.

"The size of Fa's purse seemed to me an odds-on indication that he was in the pay of the Arcturian war party. Incidentally, he must have felt very smart getting that extra 728 — a more principled beast-criminal would have scorned to profit from a mere difference in numerical systems."

THE Young Captain took some time before he answered. He smiled incredulously more than once, and once he shook his head.

Finally he said, "And you asked me to go ahead, Sean, and make my accusation, with no more indication than that?"

"It worked for you, didn't it?" the Old Lieutenant countered briskly. "And as soon as Fa started to confess, you must have known I was right beyond any possibility of doubt. Telepaths are always truth-tellers."

The Young Captain shot him a very strange look.

"It couldn't be, Sean—?" he said softly. "It couldn't be that you're a telepath yourself? That that's the alien thought system you've been studying with your Martian witch doctor?"

"If it were," the Old Lieutenant replied, "I'd tell—" He stopped. He twinkled. "Or would I?"

— **FRITZ LEIBER**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

THE BLACK CLOUD by Fred Hoyle. Harper & Bros., N.Y. $2.95

WHO is better qualified to write *science*-fiction than the celebrated Fred Hoyle?

I, for one, never suspected a fictional bent in the makeup of such a noted cosmological theoretician.

But the high quality of the narrative itself is even more astonishing.

To be sure, it contains plenty of Hoyle's pet theories, but to him the story's the thing. Though his theories may be overwhelming, he never attempts to bludgeon his reader with them. In fact, there is such an abundance of spry, dry good humor that one is forced to re-evaluate his concept of this sober scientist. With the utmost of apparent ease, Hoyle writes a brand of humor that eludes the pens of pros.

He has taken one of SF's hoariest chestnuts: the engulfment of Earth by cosmic catastrophe in the form of a giant cloud of gas. However, he has fresh-roasted it into a most palatable product. His story is so honest that his scientists don't come up with even a single

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

small-scale miracle to lick the cloud, but they do outsmart the pants off their natural enemy, the professional politicians.

Let's hope that Hoyle can tear himself away from cosmic contemplation long enough to write more superior fictional ventures like this.

EXPLORING THE DISTANT STARS by Clyde B. Clason. G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y., $5.00

THE ability to capture interest while giving instruction is a gift possessed by too few teachers. Clason, member in good standing of the Astronomical Society, is also a fictioneer, having penned the diverting *Ark of Venus* a couple of seasons back. Now he combines his talents as storyteller and lecturer in this glowing volume on self-luminous bodies.

Although the publishers claim this to be a book for the layman without specialized knowledge, their statement stands amending: the reader's understanding is not hurt by a speaking acquaintance with trigonometry and logarithms. Mathematical computations and formulae abound and are sure to be a pure delight to the well-grounded reader. However, there is so much other rewarding material, presented at times in a downright charming manner, that the lack of special education is no deterrent to enjoyment and learning.

For example, in comparing the tidal theory of planetary birth with the condensation theory: "Copulation between stars is no longer necessary. Virgin births are the prevailing rule." But Clason isn't just being cute. His object is education and his reader learns and *likes* it.

THE MAN WHO COULDN'T SLEEP by Charles Eric Maine. J. B. Lippincott, Phila., $3.00

NUMBERLESS SF authors have salted away countless humans in dreamland ever since Lawrence Manning came up with the escape formula back in the old days. In Maine's second "menacing" novel for Lippincott (#1 being *Isotope Man*), his insomniac inventor, "Dr." Maxwell, discovers Psychotape while searching for the surcease of sleep. Unfortunately, like XP in Shepherd Mead's *Big Ball of Wax,* Psychotape plays back the emotions of whoever made the recording. And as every meddling author has discovered since Manning, emotional reproductions constitute both Big Business and a Menace, (justification of nomenclature).

Since *Isotope Man* is Hollywood bound, how could the equally dismal *The Man Who Couldn't Sleep* be left behind?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SATELLITES AND SPACE-FLIGHT by Eric Burgess. The MacMillan Co., N. Y., $3.95

"EX-CHAIRMAN of the British Interplanetary Society." Say that to a man-in-the-street and he will picture a wild-eyed visionary with head in the sky and feet solidly planted on the clouds. This image would be rapidly dispelled by Burgess's jaundiced look in sober fashion at the possibilities and probabilities of space flight based on our present technology.

He finds that, von Braun aside, our massive manned assaults on space must await technological advances requiring at least a couple of decades. Of course, scientific breakthroughs are occurring that can lessen the interval, but world political tensions preclude enormous expenditures, according to Burgess.

Since his material was assembled before October '57, he reckoned without the impact on American efforts of the Soviet successes. And who knows what the Russian sleeve is hiding?

In any case, although an excellent study of the space problem, it undoubtedly errs on the side of caution.

FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON and A TRIP AROUND IT by Jules Verne. J. B. Lippincott Co., Phila., N. Y., $1.95

IT would be capricious to attempt a review of a world-famous classic. I had intended writing, "Following his enormous recent successes (*Twenty Thousand Leagues* and *Around the World*), Verne has captivated the imagination of the world with his prophetic account of a pre-Sputnik moon shot." However, sober consideration has humbled my approach to the quaintly written and frequently error-ridden book. Although Verne never laid hand to experimental object, no single person can claim as much credit for Man's present efforts to escape the confines of Earth.

Lippincott be praised for this re-issue.

THE INHABITED UNIVERSE by Kenneth W. Gatland and Derek D. Dempster. David McKay Co. Inc., N. Y., $3.95

AT first glance, it may appear that Gatland leaps wildly in all directions since he attempts to reconcile the micro- with the macro-cosmic; the material with the spiritual; the fumbling beginnings of life with psi powers. He admittedly "Casts his net wide and deep," but he has come up with, not something fishy, but real brain food.

The existence of anti-matter nas been speculation matter since Jack Williamson's old *Seetee* stories,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but in 1955 the anti-proton was discovered and the anti-neuron in '56. The possible became actual.

And did you know that in '55 no less than 35 electronic and astronautical firms were working on *anti-gravitics?* That's a brain-stopper but by no means the topper in this always interesting book.

JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE by Speedy Williams. Exposition Press, N. Y., $3.00

OCCASIONALLY, as now, the reviewer encounters a volume that engenders wonder — pure wonder, not the "sense of" that elderly fans wonder about having lost. This is such a book. It is an account of a space trip to Phobos, circumference 1,398 miles, diameter 395 miles. This is the same satellite of Mars that you and I know? The narrative abounds in other new and equally unsuspected information and absolutely yawns and creaks with narrative tension.

Colonel Speedy Williams, our hero, after suffering with the reader through the boredom of a long voyage, finally returns from Phobos with a concordat between Mars and the U.S., the "superior race" on Earth.

The dust jacket is a truly beautiful job which, once again, goes to prove that one just can't judge a book.

JUNIOR EDUCATION CORNER

WHITE LAND OF ADVENTURE by Walter Sullivan. Whittlesey House, N.Y., Toronto, $3.50

QUEST for a Continent, Sullivan's definitive work on the Antarctic, provides the source material for this volume slanted for a more youthful audience. In his own words, though, it "is no watered-down account but shorter, easier reading than the highly detailed *QFAC.*"

My observation, in fact, is that there is some material, particularly in the poignant episode of the doomed Scott expedition, that did not appear anywhere at all in the longer book.

Sullivan has done well by the story of this huge, challenging deep-freeze continent.

EXPLORING EARTH AND SPACE by Margaret O. Hyde. Whittlesey House, N. Y., Toronto, $3.00

MRS. Hyde's book is an expertly executed resumé of the program of the IGY written at about junior high school level. The various areas of investigation receive careful documentation. The net result is a coverage that is as authoritative as and more assimilable than its predecessors.

— FLOYD C. GALE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Time Killer

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

THIRD PART OF FOUR

Hunted by the living and haunted by the dead . . . Blaine had to do a lot better than merely look alive to stay alive in this grim world!

Illustrated by WOOD

SYNOPSIS

THOMAS BLAINE, a young yacht designer, is killed in a car crash while driving home to New York. He comes to life 158 years in the future, in a different body. He is questioned by

MR. REILLY, a choleric old man, president of the Rex Corporation, which has snatched Blaine's mind into the future. Reilly learns that Blaine is not the man that Rex was trying to save. Blaine is saved from Reilly's wrath by

MARIE THORNE, a cold and beautiful young woman employed by Reilly, who tells Blaine about

THE HEREAFTER CORPORATION, of which Rex is a subsidiary. This corporation guarantees, for a high fee, the certainty of life after death. Blaine also learns about

THE THRESHOLD, a region between Earth and the hereafter, inhabited by advisory spirits not yet ready for full transition to the hereafter, and by minds which have gone insane during the trauma of death.

The Hereafter Corporation has been trying to sell their life-after-death insurance to the organized religions, which do not accept the scientific hereafter. Reilly hoped to open this large potential market by bringing a religious leader from 1958 to 2112. Instead, he got Blaine — who remembers nothing about the Threshold through which he passed.

Blaine is asked to commit suicide in exchange for the precious hereafter insurance. He refuses. Reilly thinks he will change his mind, and allows Blaine to witness his reincarnation into a younger body which he has bought on the open market.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The reincarnation is begun, but a spirit fights Reilly for possession of the host body, and wins.

SMITH, as the new possessor comes to be called, can remember nothing. He is barely able to control the corpselike host body, which had remained dead too long for successful integration. Smith has, therefore, a disease of the times, known as Zombieism. Although he remembers nothing else, the zombie Smith thinks he knows Blaine — and plans to see him again.

Marie Thorne takes Blaine away from Rex for his safety, and turns him over to

CARL ORC, for safekeeping. But Orc, with the aid of a Transplant steerer named Joe, drugs Blaine. Orc is leader of a gang of body snatchers. Blaine learns this from

RAY MELHILL, another prisoner. Legal bodies are scarce, so there is a thriving black market in them for reincarnation purposes. Blaine is chloroformed and comes to consciousness in Marie Thorne's apartment.

She didn't know that Orc was a body snatcher. When she found out, she bought Blaine back. Blaine asks her to rescue his friend Ray Melhill, but it's too late. Melhill is already dead and his body inhabited by another man.

Blaine goes out in search of work, but finds no jobs he can perform in the complex world of 2112. Even the position of 'man from the past' is filled — by a fraud named Ben Therler. Blaine keeps looking, and learns something about life in this world where some have the assurance of life after death. He sees the public suicide booths, and watches a Berserker slash through a crowd until the police kill him. And Blaine receives a call from

THE SPIRITUAL SWITCHBOARD, an organization which maintains contact with the minds in the Threshold. At the Switchboard, Blaine speaks with Ray Melhill, who has survived the death trauma. Melhill, with a spirit's clairvoyant powers, warns Blaine that he is in danger of being haunted. This is a serious matter, for ghosts, werewolves, vampires are minds that have survived the death trauma, but have gone insane during it. From Melhill, Blaine gets a job lead. He is employed by

HULL, a wealthy man planning a Hunt. In 2112, rich men frequently arrange suicides when boredom becomes oppressive, and one of their gaudier methods is to employ men to hunt them down with antique weapons such as swords and spears. Hull is also armed, with a rapier, and plans to fight to the death.

SAMMY JONES, a veteran hunter, befriends Blaine. Jones

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kills Hull on the third day of the Hunt. Blaine returns to his room. There he discovers what haunting is like. A poltergeist blocks his retreat and prepares to kill him with a levitated chair.

17.

AS the chair moved through the air toward him, Blaine shouted for help in a voice that made the window rattle. His only answer was the poltergeist's high-pitched laugh.

Were they all deaf in the hotel? Why didn't someone answer?

Then he realized why no one would even consider helping him. Violence was a commonplace in this world and a man's death was entirely his own business. There would be no inquiry. The janitor would simply clean up the mess in the morning and the room would be marked vacant.

The door was impassable. The only chance Blaine could see was to jump over the bed and through the closed window. If he made the leap properly, he would fall against the waist-high fire escape railing outside. If he jumped too hard, he would go right over the railing and fall three stories to the street.

The chair beat him across the shoulders, and the bed rumbled forward to pin him against the wall. Blaine made a quick calculation of angles and distances, drew himself together and flung himself at the window.

He hit squarely — but he had reckoned without the advances of modern science. The window bent outward like a sheet of rubber, then snapped back into place. He was thrown against a wall and fell dazed to the floor. Looking up, he saw a heavy bureau wobble toward him and slowly tilt.

As the poltergeist threw its lunatic strength against the bureau, the unwatched door swung open. Smith entered the room, his thick-featured zombie face impassive, and deflected the falling bureau with his shoulder.

"Come with me," he said.

Blaine asked no questions. He scrambled to his feet and grabbed the edge of the closing door. With Smith's help, he pulled it open again and the two men slipped out. From within the room, he heard a shriek of baffled rage.

Smith hurried down the hall, one cold hand clasped around Blaine's wrist. They went downstairs, through the hotel lobby and into the street. The zombie's face was leaden white except for the purple bruise where Blaine had once struck him. The bruise had spread across nearly half his face, piebalding it into a Harlequin's grotesque mask.

"Where are we going?" Blaine asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"To a safe place," said Smith.

They reached an ancient unused subway entrance, and descended. One flight down, they came to a small iron door set in the cracked concrete wall. Smith opened the door and beckoned Blaine to follow him.

Blaine hesitated, caught the hint of high-pitched laughter. The poltergeist was pursuing him, as the Eumenides had once pursued their victims through the streets of ancient Athens. He could stay in the lighted upper world if he wished, hag-ridden by an insane spirit. Or he could descend with Smith, through the iron door and into the darkness beyond it, to some uncertain destiny in the underworld.

The shrill laughter increased. Blaine hesitated no longer. He followed Smith through the iron door and closed it behind him.

FOR the moment, the poltergeist had not chosen to pursue. They walked down a tunnel lighted by an occasional naked light bulb, past cracked masonry pipes and the looming gray corpse of a subway train, past rusted iron cables lying in giant serpent coils. The air was moist and rank, and a thin slime underfoot made walking treacherous.

"Where are we going?" Blaine asked.

"To where I can protect you from ghost attacks," Smith said.

"Can you?"

"Spirits aren't invulnerable. Exorcism is possible if the true identity of the ghost is known."

"Then you know who is haunting me?"

"I think so. There's only one person it logically could be."

"Who?"

Smith shook his head. "I'd rather not mention his name yet. No sense calling him if he's not here."

They descended a series of crumbling shale steps into a wider chamber, and circled the edge of a small black pond whose surface looked as hard and still as jet. On the other side of the pond was a passageway. A man stood in front of it, blocking the way.

He was a tall, husky Negro, dressed in rags, armed with a length of iron pipe. From his look, Blaine knew he was a zombie.

"This is my friend," Smith said. "May I bring him through?"

"You sure he's no inspector?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Wait here," the Negro said. He disappeared into the passageway.

"Where are we?" asked Blaine.

"Underneath New York, in a series of unused subway tunnels, old sewer conduits, and some passageways we've fashioned for ourselves."

"But why did we come here?"

"Where else would we go?" Smith asked, surprised. "This is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my home. Didn't you know? You're in New York's zombie colony."

BLAINE didn't consider a zombie colony much improvement over a ghost; but he didn't have time to think about it. The Negro returned. With him was a very old man who walked with the aid of a stick. The old man's face was broken into a network of a thousand lines and wrinkles. His eyes barely showed through the fine scrollwork of sagging flesh and even his lips were wrinkled.

"This is the man you told me about?" he inquired reedily.

"Yes, sir," said Smith. "This is the man. Blaine, let me introduce you to Mr. Kean, the leader of our colony. May I take him through, sir?"

"You may," the old man said. "And I will accompany you for a while."

They started down the passageway, Mr. Kean supporting himself heavily on the Negro's arm.

"In the usual course of events," said Mr. Kean, "only zombies are allowed in the colony. All others are barred. But it has been years since I spoke with a normal and I thought the experience might be valuable. Therefore, at Smith's earnest request, I made an exception in your case."

"I'm very grateful," Blaine said, hoping he had reason to be.

"Don't misunderstand me. I am not averse to helping you. But first and foremost I am responsible for the safety of the eleven hundred zombies living beneath New York. For their sake, normals must be kept out. Isolation is our only hope in an ignorant world." Mr. Kean paused. "But perhaps you can help us, Blaine."

"How?"

"By listening and understanding, and passing on what you have learned. Education alone can combat ignorance. Tell me, what do you know about the problems of a zombie?"

"Very little."

"I will instruct you. Zombieism, Mr. Blaine, is a disease which has long had a powerful aura of superstition surrounding it, comparable to the aura generated by such diseases as epilepsy, leprosy, or St. Vitus' Dance. The spiritualizing tendency is a common one. Schizophrenia, you know, was once thought to mean possession by devils, and hydrocephalic idiots were considered peculiarly blessed. Similar fantasies attach to zombieism."

THEY walked in silence for a few moments. Mr. Kean said, "The superstition of the zombie is essentially Haitian; the disease of the zombie is worldwide, although rare. But the superstition and the disease have become hopelessly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

zombie of superstition is an element of the Haitian vodun cult, a human being whose soul has been stolen by magic. The zombie's body could be used as the magician wished, could even be slaughtered and sold for meat in the marketplace. If the zombie ate salt or beheld the sea, he realized that he was dead and returned to his grave. For all this, of course, there is no basis in fact.

"The superstition arose from the descriptively similar disease. Once it was exceedingly rare. But today, with the increase in mind-switching and reincarnation techniques, zombieism has become more common. The *disease* of the zombie occurs when a mind occupies a body that has been untenanted too long. Mind and body are not then one, as yours are, Mr. Blaine. They exist, instead, as quasi-independent entities engaged in an uneasy cooperation.

"Take our friend Smith as typical. He can control his body's gross physical actions, but fine coordination is impossible for him. His voice is incapable of discrete modulation and his ears do not receive subtle differences in tone. His face is expressionless, for he has little or no control over surface musculature. He drives his body, but is not truly a part of it."

"And can't anything be done?" Blaine asked.

said Kean.

"I'm very sorry," Blaine said uncomfortably.

"This is not a plea for your sympathy," Kean told him. "It is a request only for the most elementary understanding. I simply want you and everyone to know that zombieism is not a visitation of sins, but a *disease*, like mumps or cancer, and nothing more."

Mr. Kean leaned against the wall of the passageway to catch his breath. "To be sure, the zombie's appearance is unpleasant. He shambles, his wounds never heal, he mumbles like an idiot, staggers like a drunk, stares like a pervert. But is this any reason to make him the repository of all guilt and shame upon Earth, the leper of the 22nd century? They say that zombies attack people; yet his body is fragile in the extreme, and the average zombie couldn't resist even a very young child's determined assault.

"They believe the disease is communicable and this is obviously not so. They say that zombies are sexual monsters, whereas the truth is that a zombie experiences no sexual feeling whatsoever. But people refuse to learn, and zombies are outcasts fit only for the hangman's noose or the lyncher's burning stake."

"What about the authorities?" asked Blaine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MR. Kean smiled bitterly. "They used to lock us up, as a kindness, in mental institutions. You see, they didn't want us hurt. Yet zombies are rarely insane and the authorities knew it! So now, with their tacit approval, we occupy these abandoned subway tunnels and sewer lines."

"Couldn't you find a better place?" Blaine asked.

"Frankly, the underground suits us. Sunlight is bad for unregenerative skins."

They began walking again. Blaine said, "What can I do?"

"You can tell what you learned here. Write about it, perhaps. Widening ripples . . ."

"I'll do what I can."

"Thank you," Mr. Kean said gravely. "Education is our one hope. Education and the future. Surely people will be more enlightened in the future."

The future? Blaine felt suddenly dizzy. For *this* was the future, to which he had traveled from the idealistic and hopeful 20th century. *Now* was the future! But the promised enlightenment still had not come and people were much the same as ever. He felt disoriented and old, older than Kean, older than the human race — a creature in a borrowed body standing in a place it did not know.

"And now," Mr. Kean said, "we have reached your destination."

Blaine blinked rapidly and life came back into focus. The dim passageway had ended. In front of him was a rusted iron ladder fastened to the tunnel wall, leading upward into darkness.

"Good luck," said Mr. Kean. He left, supporting himself heavily on the Negro's arm.

Blaine watched the old man go, then turned to Smith. "Where are we going?"

"Up the ladder."

"But where does it lead?"

Smith had already begun climbing. He stopped and looked down, his lead-colored lips drawn back into a grin. "We're going to visit a friend of yours, Blaine. We're going into his tomb, up to his coffin, and ask him to stop haunting you. Force him, maybe."

"A friend of mine?" Blaine repeated worriedly. "Who is he?"

Smith only grinned and continued climbing. Blaine mounted the ladder behind him.

18.

ABOVE the passageway was a ventilation shaft, which led to another passageway. They came at last to a door and went in.

They were in a large, brilliantly lighted room. Upon the arched ceiling was a mural depicting a handsome, clear-eyed man entering a gauzy blue heaven in the company of angels. Blaine knew

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at once who had sat for the painting.

"Reilly!"

Smith nodded. "We're inside his Palace of Death."

"How did you know Reilly was haunting me?"

"Only two people connected with you have died recently. The ghost certainly was not Ray Melhill. It had to be Reilly."

"But why?"

"I don't know," Smith said. "Perhaps Reilly will tell you himself."

Blaine looked at the walls. They were inlaid with crosses, crescent moons, stars and swastikas, as well as Indian, African, Arabian, Chinese and Polynesian good-luck signs. On pedestals around the room were statues of ancient deities. Among the dozens, Blaine recognized Zeus, Apollo, Damballa, Odin and Astarte. In front of each pedestal was an altar, and on each altar was a cut and polished jewel.

"What's that for?" Blaine asked.

"Propitiation."

"But life after death is a scientific fact."

"Mr. Kean maintains that science has little effect upon superstition," Smith said. "Reilly was fairly sure he'd survive after death, but he saw no reason to take chances. Also, Mr. Kean says that the very rich, like the very religious, wouldn't enjoy a hereafter filled with just *anybody*. They think that, by suitable rites and symbols, they can get into a more exclusive part of the hereafter."

"Is there a more exclusive part?"

"No one knows. As I said, Reilly was taking no chances."

Smith led him across the room to an ornate door covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese ideographs.

"Reilly's body is inside here," Smith said.

"And we're going in?"

"We have to."

SMITH pushed the door open. Blaine saw a vast marble-pillared room. In its very center was a bronze and gold coffin inlaid with jewels. Surrounding the coffin was a great and bewildering quantity of goods — paintings and sculptures, musical instruments, carvings, objects like washing machines, stoves, refrigerators, even a complete helicopter. There were clothing and books, and a lavish banquet had been laid out.

"What's all this stuff for?" Blaine asked.

"The essence of these goods is intended to accompany the owner into the hereafter. It's an old belief."

"And that?" Blaine pointed to a high marble altar in a corner of the room. Upon the altar's broad surface was a mound of gray

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ashes and a few charred bones.

"That's where the Rex Corporation officials make the weekly burnt offerings to Reilly."

"Why do they bother?"

"It's the only way they can pay Reilly's ghost for looking into the future and advising the corporation on business matters. The burnt offerings are supposed to confer special *mana* — power — on the spirit and help free him from the Wheel of Things. With no sacrifices, Reilly would fear being pulled back into a descending order of reincarnation and being reborn as a toad, perhaps, or a pig. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls is firmly believed among the rich."

Blaine's first reaction was one of pity. The scientific hereafter hadn't freed men from the fear of death, as it should have done. On the contrary, it had intensified their uncertainties and stimulated their competitive drive.

Given the surety of an afterlife, man wanted to improve upon it, to enjoy a better heaven than anyone else. Equality was all very well, but individual initiative came first. A perfect and passionless leveling was no more palatable an idea in the hereafter than it was on Earth. The desire to surpass caused a man like Reilly to build a tomb like the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, to brood all his life about death, to live continually trying to find ways of preserving his property and status in the gray uncertainties ahead.

A shame. And yet, Blaine thought, wasn't his pity based upon a lack of belief in the efficacy of Reilly's measures? Suppose you *could* improve your situation in the hereafter? In that case, what better way to spend one's time on Earth than working for a better eternity?

The proposition seemed reasonable, but Blaine refused to believe it. *That* couldn't be the only reason for existence on Earth! Good or bad, fair or foul, the thing had to be lived for its own sake.

AS Smith walked slowly into the coffin room, Blaine stopped his speculations. The zombie stood contemplating a small table covered with ornaments. Dispassionately, he kicked the table over. Then slowly, one by one, he ground the delicate ornaments into the polished marble floor.

"What are you doing?" Blaine gasped.

"You want the poltergeist to leave you alone, don't you?"

"Of course."

"Then he must have some *reason* for leaving you alone," Smith said, kicking over an elaborate ebony sculpture.

It seemed reasonable enough to Blaine. Even a ghost must know he will eventually leave the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Threshold and enter the hereafter. When he does, he wants his goods waiting for him, intact. Therefore fight fire with fire, persecution with persecution.

Still, he felt like a vandal when he picked up an oil painting and prepared to shove his fist through it.

"Don't!" ordered a voice above his head.

BLAINE and Smith looked up. Above them there seemed to be a faint silvery mist. From the mist, an attenuated voice said, "Please put down the painting."

Blaine held onto it, his fist poised. "Are you Reilly?"

"Yes."

"Why are you haunting me?"

"Because you're responsible! Everything's your fault! You killed me with your evil murdering mind! Yes, *you,* you hideous thing from the past, you damned monster!"

"I didn't!" Blaine cried.

"You did! You aren't human! You aren't natural! Everything shuns you except your friend the dead man! Why aren't *you* dead, murderer!"

Blaine's fist moved toward the painting. The thin voice screamed, "Don't!"

"Will you leave me alone?" Blaine persisted.

"Put down the painting," Reilly begged.

Blaine put it carefully down.

"I'll leave you alone," Reilly promised. "Why shouldn't I? There are things you can't see, Blaine, but *I* see them. Your time on Earth will be short, very short, painfully short. Those you trust will betray you; those you hate will conquer you. You will die, Blaine, not in years but sooner than you could believe. You'll be betrayed and you'll die by your own hand."

"You're crazy!" Blaine frightenedly shouted.

"Am I?" Reilly cackled. "Am I? *Am I?*"

The silvery mist vanished. Reilly was gone.

Smith led him back through narrow winding passageways to the street level. Outside, the air was chilly and dawn had touched the tall buildings with red and gray.

Blaine started to thank him, but Smith shook his head. "No reason for thanks. After all, I need you, Blaine. Where would I be if the poltergeist killed you? Take care of yourself, be careful. Nothing is possible for me without you."

The zombie gazed anxiously at him for a moment, then hurried away.

Blaine watched him go, wondering if it wouldn't be better to have a dozen enemies than Smith for a friend.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

19.

LESS than an hour later, he was at Marie Thorne's apartment. Marie, without makeup, dressed in a housecoat, blinked sleepily and led him to the kitchen, where she dialed coffee, toast and scrambled eggs.

"I wish," she said, "you'd make your dramatic appearances at a decent hour. It's six-thirty in the morning."

"I'll try to do better in the future," Blaine replied cheerfully.

"You said you'd call. What happened to you?"

"Did you worry?"

"Not in the least. What happened?"

Between bites of toast, Blaine told her about the hunt, the haunting, and the exorcism. She listened to it all, then said, "So you're obviously very proud of yourself, and I guess you should be. But you still don't know what Smith wants from you, or even who he is."

"Haven't the slightest idea," Blaine said. "Smith doesn't, either. Frankly, I couldn't care less."

"What happens when he finds out?"

"I'll worry about that when it happens."

Marie raised both eyebrows but made no comment. "Tom, what are your plans now?"

"I'm going to get a job."

"As a hunter?"

"No. Logical or not, I'm going to try the yacht design agencies. Then I'm going to come around here and bother you at reasonable hours. How does that sound?"

"Impractical. Do you want some good advice?"

"No."

"I'm giving it to you anyhow. Tom, get out of New York. Go as far away as you can. Go to Fiji or Samoa."

"Why should I?"

Marie began to walk restlessly around the kitchen. "You simply don't understand this world."

"I think I do."

"No! You've had a few typical experiences, Tom — that's all. But that doesn't mean you've assimilated our culture. You've been snatched, haunted, and you've gone on a hunt. But it adds up to not much more than a guided tour. Reilly was right — you're as lost and helpless as a caveman would be in your own 1958."

"That's ridiculous and I object to the comparison."

"All right, let's make it a 14th-century Chinese. Suppose this hypothetical Chinese had met a gangster, gone on a bus ride and seen Coney Island. Would you say he understood 20th-century America?"

"Of course not. But what's the point?"

"The point," she said, "is that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you aren't safe here, and you can't even sense what or where or how urgent the dangers are. For one, that damned Smith is after you. Next, Reilly's heirs might not take kindly to you desecrating his tomb; they might find it necessary to do something about it. And the directors at Rex are still arguing about what *they* should do about you. You've altered things, changed things, disrupted things. Can't you *feel* it?"

"I can handle Smith," Blaine said confidently. "To hell with Reilly's heirs. As for the directors, what can they do to me?"

"Tom," she told him earnestly, "any man born here who found himself in your shoes would run as fast as he could!"

HE was in no mood for warnings. He had survived the dangers of the hunt, had passed through the iron door into the underworld and won through again to the light. Now, sitting in Marie's sunny kitchen, he felt elated and at peace with the world. Danger seemed an academic problem not worthy of discussion at the moment, and the idea of running away from New York was absurd.

"Tell me," Blaine said lightly, "among the things I've disrupted —is one of them you?"

"I'm probably going to lose my job, if that's what you mean."

"That's not what I mean."

"Then let's not discuss it. Will you get out of New York?"

"No. And please stop sounding so panicky."

"Oh, Lord," she sighed, "we talk the same language, but I'm not getting through. You don't understand. Let me try an example." She thought for a moment. "Suppose a man owned a sailboat—"

"Do you sail? Blaine asked.

"Yes, I love sailing. Tom, listen to me! Suppose a man owned a sailboat in which he was planning an ocean voyage—"

"Across the sea of life," Blaine filled in.

"You're not funny," she said, looking very pretty and serious. "This man doesn't know anything about boats. He sees it floating, nicely painted, everything in place. He can't imagine any danger. Then *you* look the boat over. You see that the frames are cracked, teredos have gotten into the rudder post, there's dry rot in the mast, the sails are mildewed, the keel bolts are rusted, and the fastenings are ready to let go."

"Where'd you learn so much about boats?"

"I've been sailing since I was a kid. Will you *please* pay attention? You tell that man his boat is not seaworthy; the first gale is likely to sink him."

"We'll have to go sailing sometime," Blaine said.

"But this man," Marie continued

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doggedly, "doesn't know anything about boats. The thing *looks* all right. And the worst of it is you can't tell him exactly what is going to happen, or when. Maybe the boat will hold together for a month, or a year, or maybe only a week. Maybe the keel bolts will go first, or perhaps it'll be the mast. You just don't know. And that's the situation here. I can't tell you what's going to happen or when. I just know you're unseaworthy. You *must* get out of here!"

She looked at him hopefully.

Blaine nodded and said, "You'll make one hell of a crew."

"So you're not going?"

"No. I've been up all night. The only place I'm going now is to bed. Would you care to join me?"

"Go to hell!"

"Darling, please! Where's your pity for a homeless wanderer from the past?"

"I'm going out," she said. "Help yourself to the bedroom. But you'd better think about what I told you."

"Sure," said Blaine. "But why should I worry when I have you looking out for me?"

"Smith's looking out for you, too," she said, and left the kitchen.

BLAINE finished his breakfast and turned in. He awoke in the early afternoon. Marie still hadn't returned, so before leaving he wrote her a cheerful note with the address of his hotel.

During the next few days, he visited most of the yacht design agencies in New York, without success. His old firm, Mattison & Peters, was long defunct. The other firms weren't interested. Finally, at Jaakobsen Yachts, Ltd., the head designer questioned him closely about the now-extinct Chesapeake Bay and Bahamas work boats. Blaine demonstrated his considerable knowledge of the types, as well as his out-of-date draftsmanship.

"We get some calls for antique and exotic boats," the head designer said. "There are always people who want to sail something different from what their neighbor's got. We've turned out luggers, proas, sailing barges, junks, dhows, brigs, barks, and so forth. Some Chesapeake skipjacks and bugeyes might go very well right now, and some of those 20th-century Bahamas jobs with the baggy sails. Hm. Tell you what. We'll hire you as office boy. You can do 20th-century hulls on a commission basis and study up on your designing, which, frankly, is old-fashioned. When you're ready, we'll upgrade you. What do you say?"

It was an inferior position, but it was a job, a legitimate job, with a fine chance for advancement. It meant that at least he had a real place in the world of 2110.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll take it," Blaine said, "with thanks."

That evening, by way of celebration, he went to a Sensory Shop to buy a player and a few recordings. He was entitled, he thought, to a little basic luxury.

The sensories were an inescapable part of 2110, as omnipresent and popular as television had been in Blaine's day. Larger and more elaborate versions of the sensories were used for theater productions, and variations were employed for advertising and propaganda. They were, to date, the purest and most powerful form of the ready-made dream, tailored to fit anyone.

But they had their extremely vocal opponents, who deplored the ominous trend toward complete passivity in the spectator. These critics were disturbed by the excessive ease with which a person could assimilate a sensory; and, in truth, many a housewife walked blank-eyed through her days, a modern-day mystic plugged into a continual bright vision.

In reading a book or watching television, the critics pointed out, the viewer had to exert himself, to participate. But the sensories merely swept over you, vivid, brilliant, insidious, and left behind the damaging schizophrenic impression that dreams were better and more desirable than life. Such an impression could not be allowed, even if it were true. Sensories were vicious, dangerous!

To be sure, some valid artistic work was done in the sensory form. (One could not discount Verreho, Johnston or Telkin, and Blue Fox showed promise). But there was not *much* good work. And weighed against the damaging psychic effects, the lowering of popular taste, the drift toward complete passivity . . .

In another generation, the critics thundered, people will be incapable of reading, thinking or acting!

It was a strong argument. But Blaine, with his 152 years of perspective, remembered the same sort of arguments hurled at radio, movies, comic books, television and paperbacks. Even the revered novel had once been bitterly chastised for its deviation from the standards of pure literature. Every innovation seemed culturally destructive, and became, ultimately, a cultural staple, the embodiment of the good old days, the spirit of the Golden Age—to be threatened and finally destroyed by the next innovation.

The sensories, good or bad, were here. Blaine entered the store to partake of them.

AFTER looking over various models, he bought a medium-priced Bendix player. Then, with the clerk's aid, he chose three popular recordings and took them into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a booth to play. Fastening the electrodes to his forehead, he turned the first one on.

It was a popular historical, a highly romantic rendition of the *Chanson de Roland,* done in a low-intensity non-identification technique that allowed large battle effects and massed movements. The dream began.

. . . and Blaine was in the pass of Roncesvalles on that hot and fateful August morning in 778, standing with Roland's rear guard, watching the main body of Charlemagne's army wind slowly on toward Frankland. The tired veterans slumped in their high-cantled saddles; leather creaked, spurs jingled against bronze stirrup-guards. There was a smell of pine and sweat in the air, a hint of smoke from razed Pampelona, a taste of oiled steel and dry summer grass . . .

Blaine decided to buy it. The next was a high-intensity chase on Venus, in which the viewer identified fully with the hunted but innocent man. The last was a variable-intensity recording of *War and Peace,* with occasional identification sections.

As he paid for his purchases, the clerk winked at him and said, "Interested in the real stuff?"

"Maybe," Blaine said.

"I got some great party records," the clerk told him. "Full identification, with switches yet. No? Got a genuine horror piece — man dying in quicksand. The murderers recorded his death for the specialty trade."

"Perhaps some other time."

"And also," the clerk rushed on, "I got a special recording, legitimately made but withheld from the public. A few copies are being bootlegged around. Man reborn from the past. Absolutely genuine."

"Really?"

"Yes, it's perfectly unique. The emotions come through clear as a bell, sharp as a knife. A collector's item. I predict it'll become a classic."

"That I'd like to hear," Blaine said grimly.

He took the unlabeled record back to the booth. In ten minutes, he came out again, somewhat shaken, and purchased it for an exorbitant price. It was like buying a piece of himself.

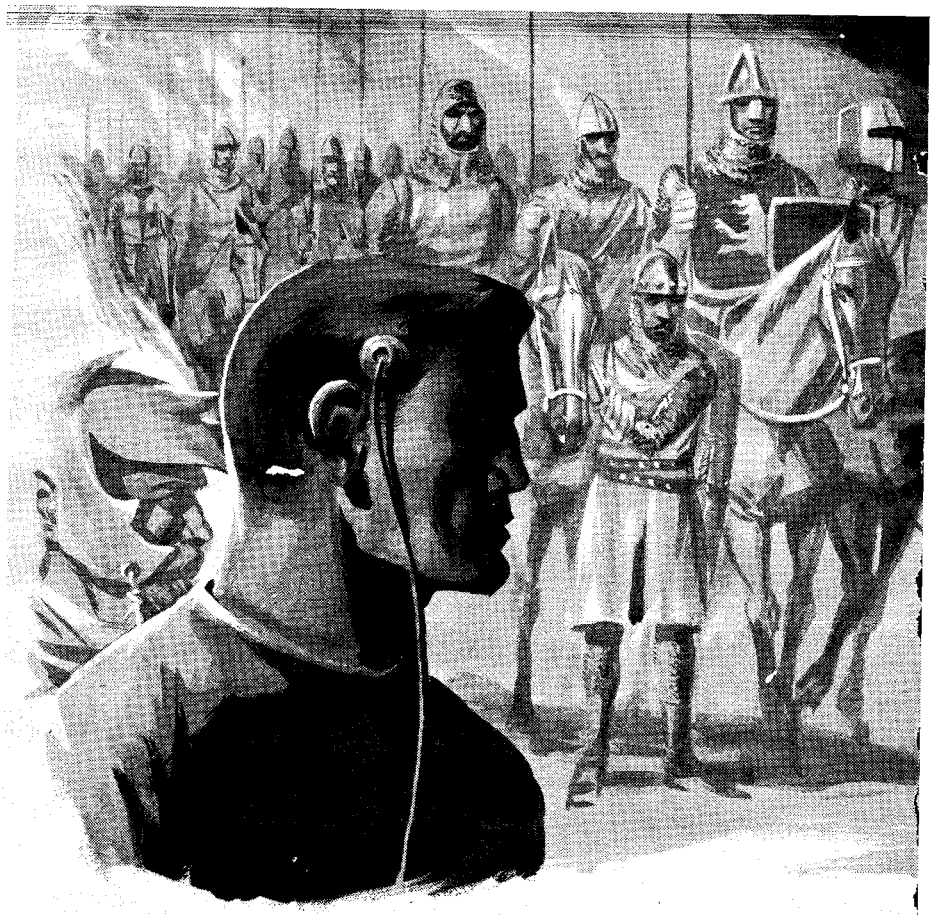
The clerk and the Rex technicians were right. It was a real collector's item and would probably become a classic.

Unfortunately, all names had been carefully erased to prevent the police from tracing its source. He was famous — but in a completely anonymous fashion.

20.

BLAINE went to his job every day, swept the floor, emptied the wastepaper baskets, addressed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



envelopes and did a few antique hulls on commission. In the evenings, he studied the complex science of advanced 22nd-century yacht design.

After a while, he was given a few small assignments writing publicity releases. He proved talented at this and was soon promoted to the position of junior yacht designer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He began handling much of the liaison between Jaakobsen Yachts, Ltd., and the various yards building to their designs.

He continued to study, but there were few requests for classic hulls. The Jaakobsen brothers handled most of the stock boats, while old Ed Richter, known as the Marvel of Salem, drew up the unusual

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

racers and multi-hulls. Blaine took over publicity and advertising and had no time for anything else.

It was responsible, necessary work. But it was *not* yacht designing. Irrevocably, his life in 2110 was falling into much the same pattern it had assumed in 1958.

Blaine pondered this carefully. On the one hand, he was happy about it. It seemed to settle, once and for all, the conflict between his mind and his borrowed body. Obviously his mind was boss.

On the other hand, the situation didn't speak too well for the quality of that mind. Here was a man who had traveled 152 years into the future, had passed through wonders and horrors, and was working again, with a weary and terrible inevitability, as a junior yacht designer who did everything but design yachts. Was there some fatal flaw in his character, some hidden defect which doomed him to inferiority no matter what his environment?

Moodily, he pictured himself flung back a million or so years, to a caveman era. Doubtless, after a period of initial adjustment, he would become a junior designer of dugouts. Only not *really* a designer. His job would be to count the wampum, check the quality of the tree trunks and contract for outriggers, while some other fellow (probably a Neanderthal genius) did the actual designing.

It was disheartening. But fortunately it was not the only way of viewing the matter. His inevitable return could also be taken as a fine example of personal solidarity, of internal steadfastness. He was a man who knew what he was. No matter how his environment changed, he remained true to his function.

Viewed this way, he could be very proud of being eternally and forever a junior yacht designer.

He continued working, fluctuating between these two basic views of himself. Once or twice he saw Marie, but she was usually busy in the high councils of the Rex Corporation. He moved out of his hotel and into a small, tastefully furnished apartment. New York was beginning to feel like home to him.

And, he remined himself, if he had gained nothing else, he had at least settled his mind-body problem.

But his body was not to be disregarded so lightly. Blaine had overlooked one of the problems likely to exist with the ownership of a strong, handsome and highly idiosyncratic body such as his.

One day the conflict flared again, more aggravated than ever.

HE had left work at the usual time and was waiting at a corner for his helibus. He noticed a woman staring intently at him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She was perhaps twenty-five years old, a buxom, attractive redhead. She was commonly dressed. Her features were bold, yet they had a certain wistful quality.

Blaine realized that he had seen her before but never really noticed her. Now that he thought about it, she had once ridden a bus with him. Once she had entered a store nearly on his heels. And several times she had been passing his building when he left work.

She had been watching him, probably for weeks. But why?

The woman hesitated a moment, then said, "Could I talk to you a moment?" Her voice was husky, pleasant, but very nervous. "Please, Mr. Blaine, it's terribly important."

So she knew his name. "Sure," Blaine said. "What is it?"

"Not here. Could we—uh—go somewhere?"

Blaine grinned and shook his head. She seemed harmless enough, but so had Carl Orc. Trusting strangers in this world was a good way of losing your mind, your body, or both.

"I don't know you," Blaine said, "and I don't know where you learned my name. Whatever you want, you'd better tell me here."

"I really shouldn't be bothering you," the woman said in a discouraged voice. "But I couldn't stop myself; I had to talk to you. I get so lonely sometimes. You know how it is?"

"Lonely? Sure, but why do you want to talk to me?"

She looked at him sadly. "That's right, you don't know."

"No, I don't," Blaine said patiently. "Why?"

"Can't we go somewhere? I don't like to say it in public like this."

"You'll have to," said Blaine, beginning to think that this was a very complicated game indeed.

"Oh, all right," the woman said, visibly embarrased. "I've been following you around for a long time, Mr. Blaine. I found out your name and where you worked. I had to talk to you. It's all on account of that body of yours."

"What?"

"Your body," she repeated, not looking at him. "You see, it used to be my husband's body before he sold it to the Rex Corporation."

Blaine's mouth opened, but he could find no adequate words.

21.

BLAINE had always known that his body had lived its own life in the world before it had been given to him. It had acted, decided, loved, hated, made its own individual imprint upon society and woven its own complex and lasting web of relationships. He could even have assumed that it had been married; most host bodies were. But he had preferred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not thinking about it. He had let himself believe that everything concerning the previous owner had conveniently disappeared.

His own meeting with Ray Melhill's snatched body should have shown him how naive that attitude was. Now, like it or not, he had to think about it.

They went to Blaine's apartment. The woman, Alice Kranch, sat dejectedly on one side of his couch and accepted a cigarette.

"The way it was," she said, "Frank—that was my husband's name, Frank Kranch — he was never satisfied with things, you know? He had a good job as a hunter, but he was never satisfied."

"A hunter?"

"Yes, he was a spearman in the China game."

"Mmm," Blaine said, wondering again what had induced him to go on his own hunt, his needs or Kranch's dormant reflexes? It was annoying to have this mind-body problem come up again just when it had seemed so nicely settled.

"But he wasn't ever satisfied," Alice Kranch said. "And it used to make him sore, those fancy rich guys getting themselves killed and going to the hereafter. He always hated the idea of dying like a dog."

"I don't blame him," Blaine said.

She shrugged her shoulders. "What can you do? Frank didn't have a chance of making enough money for hereafter insurance. It bothered him. And then he got that big wound on the shoulder that nearly put him under. I suppose you still got the scar?"

Blaine nodded.

"Well, he wasn't ever the same after that. Hunters usually don't think much about death, but Frank started to. He started thinking about it all the time. And then he met this dame from Rex."

"Marie Thorne?"

"That's the one," Alice said. "She was a skinny dame, hard as nails and cold as a fish. I couldn't understand what Frank saw in her. Oh, he played around some; most hunters do. It's on account of the danger. But there's playing around and there's playing around. Him and this fancy Rex dame were thick as thieves. I just couldn't see what Frank saw in her. I mean she was so *skinny,* and so tight-faced. She was pretty in a pinched sort of way, but she looked like she'd wear her clothes to bed, if you know what I mean."

Blaine nodded again, this time a little painfully. "Go on."

"Well, there's no accounting for some tastes, but I thought I knew Frank's. And I guess I did because it turned out he *wasn't* going with her. It was strictly business. It even turned out they'd known each other when they were kids at school and she was trying to do him a favor."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HE blinked rapidly when he heard this. He wondered how much Marie had helped him for himself and how much out of a lingering loyalty to Kranch's body. Probably a little of both, he decided.

"So anyway," Alice went on, "Frank turned up one day and said to me, 'Baby, I'm leaving you. I'm taking that big, long trip into the hereafter. There's a nice piece of change in it for you, too.'"

She sighed and wiped her eyes. "That big idiot had sold his body! Rex had given him hereafter insurance and an annuity for me, and he was so damned proud of himself! Well, I talked myself blue in the face trying to get him to change his mind. No chance, he was going to eat pie in the sky. To his way of thinking, his number was up anyhow, and the next hunt would do him. So off he went. He talked to me once from the Threshold."

"Is he still there?" Blaine asked, with a prickling sensation at the back of his neck.

"I haven't heard from him in over a year," Alice said, "so I guess he's gone on to the hereafter. The bastard!"

She cried for a few moments, then wiped her eyes with a small handkerchief and looked mournfully at Blaine. "I wasn't going to bother you. After all, it was Frank's body to sell and it's yours now. I don't have any claims on it or you. But I get so blue, so lonely."

"I can imagine," Blaine murmured, thinking that she was definitely not his type. Objectively speaking, she was pretty enough. Comely but overblown. Her features were well-formed, bold, vividly colored. Her hair, although obviously not a natural red, was shoulder length and of a smooth texture. She was the sort of woman he could picture, hands on hips, arguing with a policeman, hauling in a fishnet, dancing to a flamenco guitar, or herding goats on a mountain path with a full skirt swishing around ample hips and peasant blouse distended.

But she was not to his taste.

However, he reminded himself, Frank Kranch had found her very much to *his* taste. And he was wearing Kranch's body.

"Most of our friends," Alice was saying, "were hunters in the China game. Oh, they dropped around sometimes after Frank left. But you know hunters; they've got just one thing on their minds."

"Is that a fact?" said Blaine uneasily.

"Yes. And so I moved out of Peking and came back to New York, where I was born. And then one day I saw Frank — I mean you. I could have fainted on the spot. I mean I might have expected it and all, but still it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gives you a turn to see your husband's body walking around."

"I should think so," Blaine agreed.

"So I followed you. I wasn't ever going to bother you or anything, but it just kept bothering me all the time. And I sort of got to wondering what kind of a man was . . . I mean Frank was so — well, he and I got along very well, if you know what I mean."

"Certainly," Blaine said.

"I'll bet you think I'm terrible!"

"Not at all!" said Blaine.

She looked him full in the face, her expression mournful and coquettish. Blaine felt Kranch's old scar throb.

But remember, he told himself, Kranch is gone. Everything is *Blaine* now, Blaine's will, Blaine's way, Blaine's taste . . .

Isn't it?

This problem must be settled, he thought, seizing the willing Alice and kissing her with an un-Blainelike fervor.

IN the morning, Alice made breakfast. Blaine sat staring out his window, thinking dismal thoughts.

Last night had proven to him conclusively that Kranch was still king of the Kranch-Blaine body-mind. For last night he had been completely unlike himself. He had been fierce, violent, rough, angry and exultant. He had been all the things he had always deplored, had acted with an abandon that unnerved him to remember.

That was not Blaine. That was *Kranch,* the Body Triumphant.

Blaine had always prized delicacy, subtlety, the grasp of nuance. Too much, perhaps. Yet those had been his virtues, the expressions of his own individual personality. With them, he was Thomas Blaine. Without them, he was less than nothing — a shadow cast by the eternally triumphant Kranch.

Gloomily, he contemplated the future. He would give up the struggle, become what his body demanded — a fighter, a brawler, a lusty vagabond. Perhaps, in time, he would grow used to it, even enjoy it . . .

"Breakfast's ready," Alice announced.

They ate in silence and Alice moodily fingered a bruise on her forearm. At last Blaine could stand it no longer.

"Look," he said, "I'm sorry."

"What for?"

"Everything."

She smiled wanly. "That's all right. It was my fault, really."

"I doubt that. Pass the butter, please."

She passed the butter. They ate in silence for a few minutes. Then Alice said, "I was very, very stupid."

"Why?"

"I guess I was chasing a dream,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she said. "I thought I could find Frank all over again. I'm not really that way, Mr. Blaine. But I thought it would be like with Frank."

"And wasn't it?"

She shook her head. "No, of course not."

Blaine put down his coffee cup carefully. He said, "I suppose Kranch was rougher. I suppose he batted you from wall to wall. I suppose—"

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Never! Mr. Blaine, Frank was a hunter, and he lived a hard life. But with me he was always a perfect gentleman. He had manners, Frank had."

"He had?"

"He certainly had! Frank was always gentle with me, Mr. Blaine. He was — delicate, if you know what I mean. Nice. Gentle. He was never, *never* rough. To tell the truth, he was the very opposite from you, Mr. Blaine."

"Uh," said Blaine.

"Not that there's anything wrong with you," she said with hasty kindness. "You *are* a little rough, but I guess it takes all kinds."

"I guess it does," Blaine said. "Yes, I guess it sure does."

They finished their breakfast in embarrassed silence. Alice, freed of her obsessive dream, left for her own apartment immediately afterward, with no suggestion that they meet again. Blaine sat in his big chair, staring out the window, thinking.

So he wasn't like Kranch!

The sad truth was, he told himself, he had acted as he *imagined* Kranch would have acted in similar circumstances. He had convinced himself that a strong, active, hearty outdoors man would necessarily treat a woman like a wrestling bear.

He had acted out a stereotype. He would feel even sillier if he weren't so relieved at regaining his threatened Blaineism.

He frowned as he remembered Alice's description of Marie: Skinny, hard as nails, cold as a fish. *More* stereotyping.

But, under the circumstances, he could hardly blame Alice.

22.

A FEW days later, Blaine received word that a communication was waiting for him at the Spiritual Switchboard. He went there after work and was sent to the booth he had used previously.

Melhill's amplified voice said, "Hello, Tom."

"Hello, Ray. I was wondering where you were."

"I'm still in the Threshold," Melhill told him, "but I won't be much longer. I gotta go on and see what the hereafter is like. It pulls at me. But I wanted to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you should watch out for Marie Thorne."

"Now, Ray—"

"I mean it. She's been spending all her time at Rex. I don't know what's going on there; they got the conference rooms shielded against psychic invasion. But something's brewing over you and she's in the middle of it."

"I'll keep my eyes open," Blaine said.

"Tom, please take my advice. Get out of New York. Get out fast, while you still have a body, and a mind to run it with."

"I'm staying," said Blaine.

"You stubborn ape," Melhill said, with deep feeling. "What's the use of having a guardian spirit if you don't even once take his advice?"

"I appreciate your help," Blaine assured him. "I really do. But tell me truthfully, how much better off would I be if I ran?"

"You might be able to stay alive a little longer."

"Only a little? Is it really that bad?"

"Bad enough. Tom, remember not to trust *anybody*. I gotta go now."

"Will I speak to you again, Ray?"

"Maybe," Melhill said. "Maybe not. Good luck, kid."

The interview was ended. Blaine returned to his apartment.

Blaine lounged in bed late, made himself breakfast and called Marie. She was out. He decided to spend the day relaxing and playing his sensory recordings.

That afternoon, he had two callers.

The first was a gentle, hunchbacked old woman dressed in a dark, severe uniform. Across her army-style cap were the words OLD CHURCH.

"Sir," she said in a slightly wheezy voice, "I am soliciting contributions for the Old Church, an organization which seeks to promote faith in these dissolute and Godless times."

"Sorry," said Blaine, and started to close the door.

But the old woman must have had many doors closed on her. She wedged her foot between door and jamb and passionately continued talking.

"This, young sir, is the age of the Babylonian Beast and the time of the soul's destruction. This is Satan's age and the time of his seeming triumph. But be not deceived! The Lord Almighty has allowed this to come about for a trial and a testing, and a winnowing of grain from chaff. Beware the temptation! Beware the path of evil which lies wickedly and alluringly before you!"

Blaine gave her a dollar just to shut her up. The old woman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thanked him but continued talking.

"Beware, young sir, that ultimate lure of Satan — the false heaven which men call the hereafter! For what better snare could Satan the Deceiver devise for the world of men than this, his greatest illusion! The illusion that hell is heaven! And men are deceived by the cunning deceit and willingly go down into it!"

"Thank you," Blaine said, trying to shut the door.

"Remember my words!" the old woman shrilled, fixing him with a glassy blue eye. "The hereafter is evil! Beware the prophets of the hellish afterlife!"

"Thank you!" Blaine yelled, and managed to close the door.

He relaxed in his armchair again and turned on the player. For nearly an hour, he was absorbed in *Flight on Venus*. Then there was a knock on his door.

Blaine opened it and saw a short, well-dressed, chubby-faced, earnest-looking young man.

"Mr. Thomas Blaine?" the man asked.

"That's me."

"Mr. Blaine, I am Charles Farrell, from the Hereafter Corporation. Might I speak to you? If it is inconvenient now, perhaps we could make an appointment for some other—"

"Come in," Blaine said, opening the door wide for the prophet of the hellish afterlife.

FARRELL was a mild, businesslike, soft-spoken prophet. His first move was to give Blaine a letter written on Hereafter, Inc., stationery, stating that Charles Farrell was a fully authorized representative of the Hereafter Corporation. Included in the letter was a meticulous description of Farrell, his signature, three stamped photographs and a set of fingerprints.

"And here are my identity proofs," Farrell said, opening his wallet and showing his heli license, library card, voter's registration certificate and government clearance card. On a separate piece of treated paper, Farrell impressed the fingerprints of his right hand and gave them to Blaine for comparison with those on the letter.

"Is all this necessary?" Blaine inquired.

"Absolutely," Farrell told him. "We've had some unhappy occurrences in the past. Unscrupulous operators *will* try to pass themselves as Hereafter representatives among the gullible and the poor. They offer salvation at a cut rate, take what they can get and skip town. Too many people have been cheated out of everything they own and gotten nothing in return. For the illegal operators, even when they represent some little fly-by-night salvation company, have none of the expensive equipment and trained technicians that are needed."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I didn't know," Blaine said. "Won't you sit down?"

Farrell took a chair. "The Better Business Bureaus are trying to do something about it. But the fly-by-nights move too fast to be easily caught. Only Hereafter, Inc., and two other companies with government-approved techniques are able to deliver what they promise — life after death."

"What about the various mental disciplines?" asked Blaine.

"I was purposely excluding them," Farrell said. "They're a completely diffffferent category. If you have the patience and determination necessary for twenty years or so of concentrated study, more power to you. If you don't, then you need scientific aid and implementation. And that's where we come in."

"I'd like to hear about it," Blaine said.

Mr. Farrell settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "If you're like most people, you probably want to know what is life? What is death? What is a mind? Where is the interaction point between mind and body? Is the mind also soul? Is the soul also mind? Are they independent of each other, or interdependent, or intermixed? Or is there any such thing as a soul?" Farrell smiled. "Are those some of the questions you want me to answer?"

Blaine nodded.

FARRELL said, "Well, I can't. We simply don't know, haven't the slightest idea. As far as we're concerned, those are religio-philosophical questions which Hereafter, Inc., has no intention of even *trying* to answer. We're interested in results, not speculation. Our orientation is medical. Our approach is pragmatic. We don't care how or why we get our results or how strange they seem. *Do they work?* That's the only question we ask, and that's our basic position."

"I think you've made it clear," Blaine said.

"It's important for me to do so at the start. So let me make one more thing clear. Don't make the mistake of thinking that we are offering heaven."

"No?"

"Not at all! Heaven is a religious concept and we have nothing to do with religion. Our hereafter is a survival of the *mind* after the body's death. That's all. We don't claim the hereafter is heaven any more than early scientists claimed that the bones of the first cavemen were the remains of Adam and Eve."

"An old woman called here earlier," Blaine said. "She told me that the hereafter is hell."

"She's a fanatic," Farrell replied, grinning. "She follows me around. And for all I know, she's right."

"What *do* you know about the hereafter?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not very much," Farrell told him. "All we know for sure is this: After the body's death, the mind moves to a region we call the Threshold, which exists between Earth and the hereafter. It is, we believe, a sort of preparatory state to the hereafter itself. Once the mind is there, it can move at will into the hereafter."

"But what is the hereafter like?"

"We don't know. We're fairly sure it's non-physical. Beyond that, everything is conjecture. Some think that the mind is the essence of the body and therefore the essences, so to speak, of a man's worldly goods can be brought into the hereafter with him. It could be so. Others disagree. Some feel that the hereafter is a place where souls await their turn for rebirth on other planets as part of a vast reincarnation cycle. Perhaps that's true, too. Some feel that the hereafter is only the first stage of post-Earth existence and that there are six others, increasingly difficult to attain, culminating in a sort of nirvana. Could be.

"It's been said that the hereafter is a vast, misty region where you wander alone, forever searching, never finding. I've read theories that say people must be grouped in the hereafter according to family; others state you're grouped there according to race, or religion, or skin coloration, or social position. Some people, as you've observed, say it's hell itself you're entering. There are advocates of a theory of illusion, who claim that the mind vanishes completely when it leaves the Threshold. And there are people who accuse us at the corporation of faking all our effects.

"A recent learned work states that you'll find whatever you want in the hereafter — heaven, paradise, valhalla, green pastures, take your choice. A claim is made that the old gods rule in the hereafter — the gods of Haiti, Scandinavia or the Belgian Congo, depending on whose theory you're following. Naturally a counter-theory shows that there can't be any gods at all. I've seen an English book declaring that English spirits rule the hereafter, and a Russian book claiming that the Russians rule, and several American books that say the Americans rule.

"A book came out last year stating that the government of the hereafter is anarchy. A leading philosopher insists that competition is a law of nature and must be so in the hereafter, too. And so on. You can take your pick of any of those theories, Mr. Blaine, or you can make up one of your own."

"WHAT do you think?" Blaine asked.

"Me? I'm keeping an open mind," Farrell said. "When the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time comes, I'll go there and find out."

"That's good enough for me," said Blaine. "Unfortunately, I won't have a chance. I don't have the kind of money you people charge."

"I know," Farrell said. "I checked into your finances before I called."

"Then why—"

"Every year," said Farrell, "a number of free hereafter grants are made, some by philanthropists, some by corporations and trusts, a few on a lottery basis. I am happy to say, Mr. Blaine, that you have been selected for one of these grants."

"Me?"

"Let me offer my congratulations," Farrell said. "You're a very lucky man."

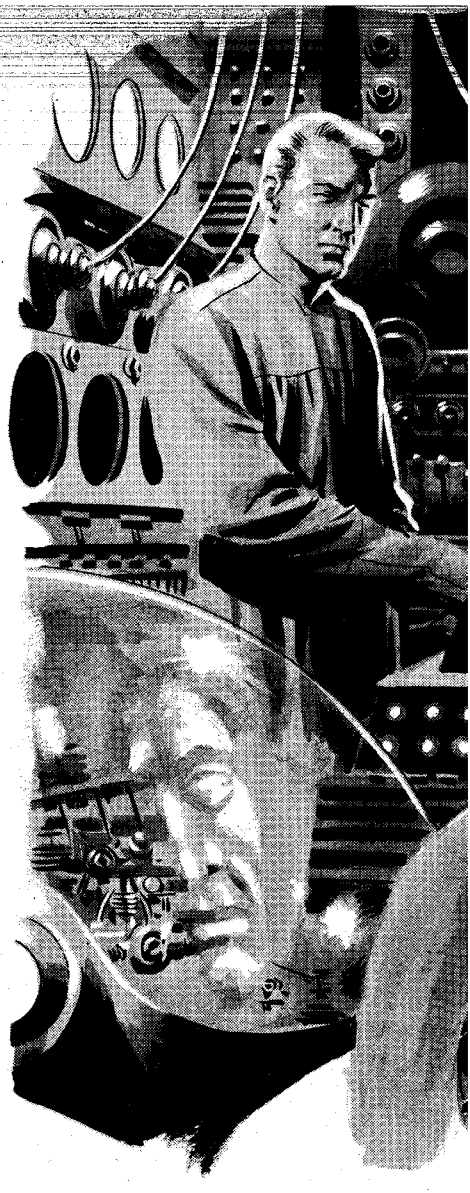
"But who gave me the grant?"

"The Main-Farbenger Textile Corporation."

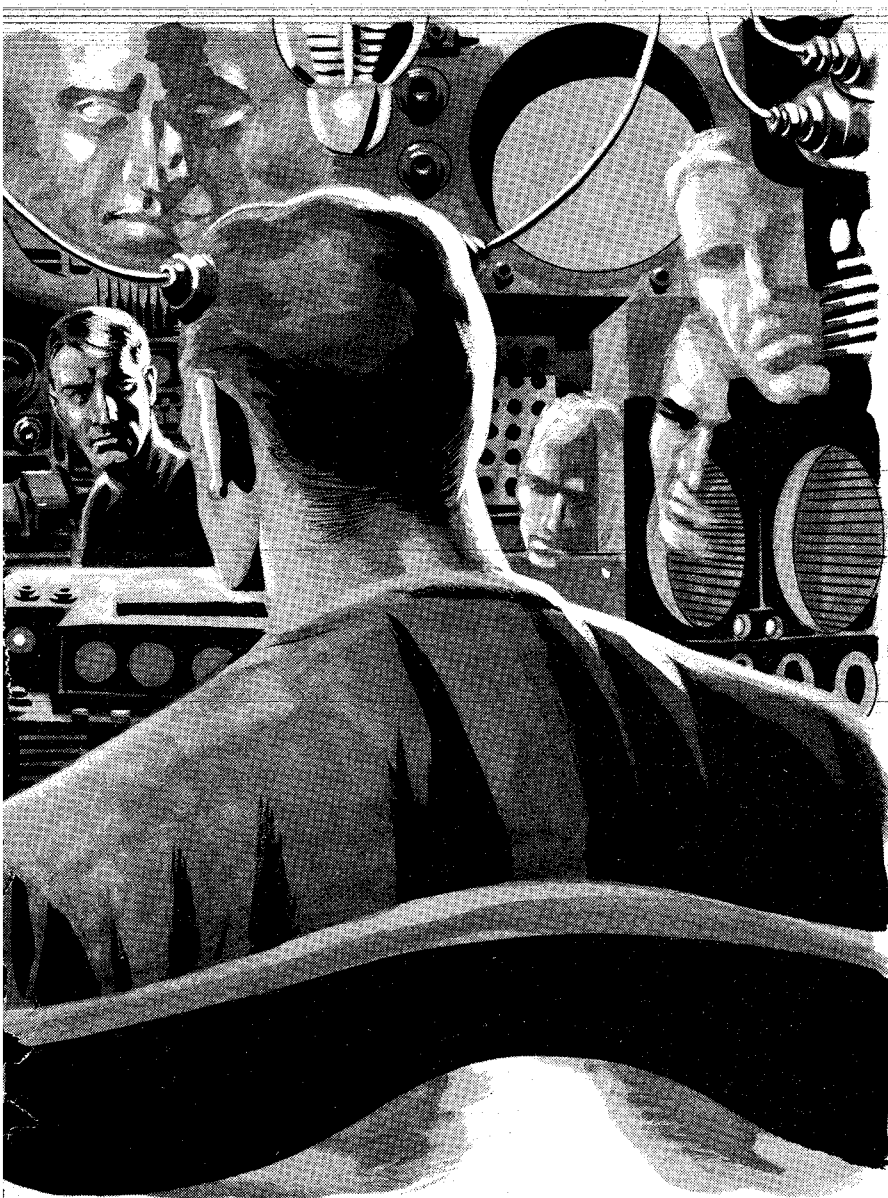
"I never heard of them."

"Well, they heard of you. The grant is in recognition of your trip here from the year 1958. Do you accept it?"

Blaine stared hard at the Hereafter representative. Farrell seemed genuine enough; anyhow, his story could be checked at the Hereafter Building. Blaine had his suspicions of the splendid gift thrust so unexpectedly into his hands. But the thought of an assured life after death outweighed



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any possible doubts, pushed aside any possible fears. Caution was all very well, but not when the gates of the hereafter were being opened for you.

"What do I have to do?" he asked.

"Simply accompany me to the Hereafter Building," Farrell said. "We can have the necessary work done in a few hours."

Survival! Life after death!

"All right," Blaine said. "I accept the grant. Let's go!"

They left Blaine's apartment at once.

23.

A HELICAB brought them directly to the Hereafter Building. Farrell led the way to the Admissions Office and gave a photo copy of Blaine's grant to the woman in charge. Blaine made a set of fingerprints and produced his hunter's license for further identity. The woman checked all the data carefully against her master list of acceptances. Finally she was satisfied with its validity and signed the admission papers.

Farrell then took Blaine to the Testing Room, wished him luck, and left him.

In the Testing Room, a squad of young technicians ran Blaine through a gamut of examinations. Banks of calculators clicked and rattled and spewed forth yards of paper and showers of punched cards. Ominous machines bubbled and squeaked at him, glared with giant red eyes, winked and turned amber. Automatic pens squiggled across pieces of graph paper. And through it all, the technicians kept up a lively shop talk.

"Interesting beta reaction. Think we can fair that curve?"

"Sure, sure, just lower his drive coefficient."

"Hate to do that. It weakens the web."

"You don't have to weaken it *that* much. He'll still take the trauma."

"Maybe. What about this Henlinger factor? It's off."

"That's because he's in a host body. It'll come around."

"That one didn't last week. The guy went up like a rocket."

"He was too damned unstable to begin with."

Blaine said, "Hey! Is there any chance of this not working?"

The technicians turned as though seeing him for the first time.

"Every case is different, pal," a technician told him.

"Each one has to be worked out on an individual basis."

"It's just problems, problems all the time."

BLAINE said, "I thought the treatment was all worked out. I heard it was infallible."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sure, that's what they tell the customers," one of the technicians said scornfully.

"Things go wrong here every so often. We still got a long way to go."

Blaine said, "But can you tell if the treatment takes?"

"Of course. If it takes, you're still alive."

"If it doesn't, you never walk out of here."

"It *usually* takes," a technician said consolingly. "On everybody but a K3."

"It's that lousy K3 factor that throws us. Come on, Jamiesen, is he a K3 or not?"

"I'm not sure," Jamiesen said, hunched over a flashing instrument. "The testing machine is all bitched up again."

Blaine said, "What is a K3?"

"I wish *we* knew," Jamiesen said moodily. "All we know for certain, guys with a K3 factor can't survive after death."

"Not under any circumstances."

"Old Fitzroy thinks it's a built-in limiting factor that nature included so the species wouldn't run wild."

"But K3s don't transmit the factor to their children."

"There's still a chance it lies dormant and skips a few generations."

"Am I a K3?" Blaine asked, trying to keep his voice steady.

"Probably not," Jamiesen said warily. "It's not particularly common. Let me check."

Blaine waited while the technicians went over their data, and Jamiesen tried to determine from his faulty machine whether or not Blaine had a K3 factor.

After a while, Jamiesen looked up. "Well, I guess he's not K3. Though who knows, really? Anyhow, let's get on with it."

"What comes next?" asked Blaine.

A hypodermic bit deeply into his arm.

"Don't worry," a technician told him, "everything's going to be just fine."

"Are you *sure* I'm not K3?" Blaine insisted.

The technician nodded in a perfunctory manner. Blaine wanted to ask more questions, but a wave of dizziness overcame him. The technicians were lifting him, putting him on a white operating table.

WHEN he recovered consciousness, he was lying on a comfortable couch listening to soothing music. A nurse handed him a glass of sherry, and Mr. Farrell was standing by, beaming.

"Feel okay?" Farrell asked. "You should. Everything went off perfectly."

"It did?"

"No possibility of error. Mr. Blaine, the hereafter is yours."

Blaine finished his sherry and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stood up, a little shakily. "Life after death is mine? Whenever I die? Whatever I die of?"

"That's right. No matter how or when you die, your mind will survive after death. How do you feel?"

"I don't know," Blaine said.

It was only half an hour later, as he was returning to his apartment, that he began to react.

The hereafter was his!

He was filled with a sudden wild elation. Nothing mattered now, nothing whatsoever! He was immortal! He could be killed on the spot and yet live on!

He felt superbly drunk. Gaily, he contemplated throwing himself under the wheels of a passing truck. What did it matter? Nothing could really hurt him! He could berserk now, slash merrily through the crowds. Why not? The only thing the flathats could kill was his body!

The feeling was indescribable. Now, for the first time, Blaine realized what men had lived with before the discovery of the scientific hereafter. He remembered the heavy, sodden, constant, unconscious fear of death that subtly weighted every action and permeated every movement. The ancient enemy death, the shadow that crept down the corridors of a man's mind like some grisly tapeworm, the ghost that haunted nights and days, the croucher behind corners, the shape behind doors, the unseen guest at every banquet, the unidentified figure in every landscape, always present, always waiting—

No more.

For now a tremendous weight had been lifted from his mind. The fear of death was gone, intoxicatingly gone, and he felt light as air. Death, that ancient enemy, was defeated!

HE returned to his apartment in a state of high euphoria. The telephone was ringing as he unlocked the door.

"Blaine speaking!"

"Tom!" It was Marie Thorne. "Where have you been? I've been trying to reach you all afternoon."

"I've been out, darling," Blaine said. "Where in hell have *you* been?"

"I've been trying to find out what Rex is up to. Now listen carefully. I have some important news for you."

"I've got some news for you, sweetheart," Blaine said.

"Listen to me! A man will call at your apartment today. He'll be a salesman from Hereafter, Inc., and he will offer you free hereafter insurance. Don't take it."

"Why not? Is he a fake?"

"No, he's perfectly genuine, and so is the offer. But you mustn't take it."

"I already did," Blaine said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"*You what?*"

"He was here a few hours ago. I accepted it."

"Have they treated you yet?"

"Yes. Was that a fake?"

"No," Marie said, "of course it wasn't. Oh, Tom, when *will* you learn not to accept gifts from strangers? There was time for hereafter insurance later. Oh, you fool, you complete and absolute fool!"

"What's wrong?" Blaine asked. "It was a grant from the Main-Farbenger Textile Corporation."

"They are owned completely by the Rex Corporation," Marie told him.

"Oh . . . But so what?"

"The directors of Rex gave you that grant! They used Main-Farbenger as a front, but *Rex* gave you the grant! Can't you see what it means?"

"No. Will you please stop screaming and explain?"

"Tom, it's the Permitted Murder section of the Suicide Act. They're going to invoke it."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the section of the Suicide Act that makes host-taking legal. Rex has guaranteed the survival of your mind after death and you've accepted it. Now they can legally take your body for any purpose they desire. They own it. They can *kill* your body, Tom! And they're going to."

"Kill me? Why?"

"It's that recording you made when you first came to 2110. It's been bootlegged all over the city and the organized religions have gotten hold of it. You say on the recording that you don't remember anything about the Threshold, even though you were in it before being reborn. Right?"

"Sure. So?"

"So the religions are planning to use that against Rex, to disprove the validity of the scientific hereafter. They want you to testify to the authenticity of the recording. And Rex will do anything to stop you from testifying. If the religions scored their point, Rex would lose any chance at the religious market. They'd probably lose a lot of other customers, too."

BLAINE frowned. "Tell Rex I won't testify. Won't that satisfy them?"

"They don't trust you. They can't afford to. Rex has already gone into action to prove that your recording is a forgery. They've bribed that phony from the past, that Ben Therler, to come forward and say he's you, and to admit that he's *not* from the past. Therler is saying he faked the whole thing for publicity reasons. And of course he *is* a fake, so it's easy to prove."

"So that leaves me—"

"It leaves you a potential danger that Rex wants to get rid of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as quickly as possible, before the religions find you and check your authenticity against Therler's. The quickest and surest way of getting rid of you is by killing you."

"Can't you convince them I won't talk?" Blaine asked.

"I'm afraid they won't listen to anything I tell them. I'm in trouble myself."

"Why?"

"Because they found I smuggled out your recording."

"*You* did?"

"I've been an agent of the religions for a long time," Marie told him. "I'm not particularly religious, but I felt that Rex and the Hereafter Corporation were getting too much of a stranglehold on the world. I don't like to see *anybody* doing that. But there's no time to talk about it now. Tom, you must get out of New York, then out of the country. Maybe they'll leave you alone then. I'll help all I can. I think that you should—"

The telephone went dead.

Blaine clicked the receiver several times, but got no dial tone. Apparently the line had been cut.

The elation he had been filled with a few minutes ago drained out of him. The intoxicating sense of freedom from death vanished. How could he have contemplated berserking? He wanted to *live*. He wanted to live in the flesh, upon the Earth he knew and loved. Spiritual existence was fine, but he didn't want it yet. Not for a long time. He wanted to live among tangible objects, breathe air, eat solids and drink liquids, feel flesh surrounding him, touch other flesh.

When would they try to kill him? Any time at all. His apartment was like a trap.

Blaine scooped all his money into a pocket and hurried to the door. He opened it and looked up and down the hall. It was empty.

He ran down the corridor, and stopped.

A man had just come around the corner. The man was standing in the center of the hall. He was carrying a large projector, which was aimed at Blaine's stomach.

The man was Sammy Jones.

JONES sighed. "Believe me, Tom, I'm damned sorry it's you. But business is business."

Blaine stood, frozen, as the projector lifted to level on his chest.

"Why you?" Blaine managed to ask.

"Who else?" Sammy Jones said. "Ain't I the best hunter in the Western Hemisphere, and probably Europe, too? Rex hired every one of us in the New York area. But with beam and projectile weapons this time. I'm sorry it's you, Tom."

"But I'm a hunter, too," Blaine objected.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You won't be the first hunter that got gunned. It's the breaks of the game, lad. Don't flinch. I'll make it quick and clean."

"I don't want to die!"

"Why not?" Jones asked. "You've got your hereafter insurance."

"I was tricked! I want to live! Sammy, don't do it!"

Sammy Jones' face hardened. He took careful aim, then lowered the gun.

"All right, Tom, start moving. Every Quarry should have a little head start, a sporting chance. Now get going. You're not entitled to as much of a lead in the city as the countryside, so don't waste any time."

"Thanks, Sammy," Blaine said, and hurried down the hall.

"But, Tom, watch your step if you really want to live. I'm telling you, New York is full of hunters right now, all of them after you. And every means of transportation is guarded."

"Thanks," Blaine called, as he hurried down the stairs.

He was in the street, but he didn't know where to go. Still, he had no time for indecision. It was late afternoon, hours before darkness could help him. He picked a direction in great haste and began walking.

Almost instinctively, his steps were leading him toward the slums of the city.

24.

HE walked past the rickety tenements and ancient apartment houses, past the cheap saloons and nightclubs, hands thrust in his pockets, trying to think. He had to flee New York.

Jones had told him that the transportation services were being watched. What hope had he then? He was unarmed, defenseless—

Well, perhaps he could change that. With a gun in his hand, things would be a little different. In fact, things might be very different indeed. As Hull had pointed out, a hunter could legally shoot a Quarry, but if a Quarry shot a hunter, he was subject to arrest and severe penalties.

If he did shoot a hunter, the police would have to arrest him! It would all get very involved, but it would save him from the immediate danger.

He walked until he came to a pawnshop. In the window was a glittering array of projectile and beam weapons, hunting rifles, knives and machetes. Blaine went in.

"I want a gun," he said to the mustached man behind the counter.

"A gun. So. And what kind of a gun?" the man asked.

"Have you got any beamers?"

The man nodded and went to a drawer. He took out a gleaming

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

handgun with a bright copper finish.

"Now this," he said, "is a special buy. It's a genuine Sailes-Byrn needlebeam, used for hunting big Venusian game. At five hundred yards, you can cut through anything that walks, crawls or flies. On the side is the aperture selector. You can fan wide for close-range work, or extend to a needle point for distance shooting."

"Fine, fine," Blaine said, pulling bills from his pocket.

"This button here," the pawnbroker went on, "controls length of blast. Set as is, you get a standard fractional jolt. One click extends time to a quarter second. Put it on automatic and it'll cut like a scythe. It has a power supply of over four hours, and there's more than three hours still left in the original pack. What's more, you can use this weapon in your home workshop. With a special mounting and a baffle to cut down the power, you can slice plastic with this better than with a saw. A different baffle converts it into a blowtorch. The baffles can be purchased—"

"I'll buy it," Blaine broke in.

The pawnbroker nodded. "May I see your permit, please?"

BLAINE took out his hunter's license and showed it to the man. The pawnbroker nodded, and, with maddening slowness, filled out a receipt for the gun.

The pawnbroker said, "That'll be seventy-five dollars." As Blaine pushed the money across the counter, the pawnbroker consulted a list on the wall behind him.

"I can't sell you that weapon."

"Why not?" Blaine demanded. "You saw my hunter's license."

"But you didn't tell me you were a registered Quarry. You know a Quarry can't legally have weapons. Your name was flashed here half an hour ago. You can't buy a legal weapon anywhere in New York, Mr. Blaine."

The pawnbroker pushed the bills back across the counter. Blaine grabbed for the needle-beam. The pawnbroker scooped it up first and leveled it at him.

"I ought to save them the trouble," he said. "You've got your damned hereafter. What else do you want?"

Blaine stood perfectly still. The pawnbroker lowered the gun.

"But that's not my job," he said. "The hunters will get you soon enough."

He reached under the counter and pressed a button. Blaine turned and ran out of the store. It was growing dark. But his location had been revealed. The hunters would be closing in now.

He thought he heard someone calling his name. He pushed through the crowds, not daring to look back, trying to think of some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing to do. He couldn't have come 152 years through time to be shot before a million people! It wasn't fair!

He noticed a man following close behind him, grinning. It was Theseus, gun out, waiting for a clear shot.

Blaine put on a burst of speed, dodged through the crowds and turned quickly into a side street. He sprinted down it, then came to a sudden stop.

At the far end of the street, silhouetted against the light, a man was standing. The man had one hand on his hip, the other raised in a shooting position. Blaine hesitated and glanced back at Theseus.

The little hunter fired, scorching Blaine's sleeve. Blaine ran toward an open door, which was suddenly slammed in his face. A second shot charred his coat.

WITH dreamlike clarity, he watched the hunters advance, Theseus close behind him, the other hunter in the distance, blocking the way out. Blaine ran on leaden feet toward the more distant man, over manhole covers and subway gratings, past shuttered stores and locked buildings.

"Back off, Theseus!" the hunter called. "I got him!"

"Take him, Hendrick!" Theseus called back, and flattened himself against a wall, out of the way of the blast.

The gunman, fifty feet away, took aim and fired. Blaine fell flat and the beam missed him. He rolled, trying to make the inadequate shelter of a doorway. The beam probed after him, scoring the concrete and turning the puddles of sewer water into steam.

Then a subway grating gave way beneath him.

As he fell, he knew that the grating must have been weakened by the lancing beam. Blind luck! But he had to land on his feet. He had to stay conscious, drag himself away from the opening, or his body would be lying in full view of the opening, an easy target for hunters standing on the edge.

He tried to twist in mid-air, too late. He landed heavily on his shoulders and his head slammed against an iron stanchion. But the need to stay conscious was so great that he pulled himself to his feet.

He had to drag himself out of the way, deep into the subway passage, far enough so they couldn't find him.

But even the first step was too much. Sickeningly, his legs buckled under him. He fell on his face, rolled over and stared at the gaping hole above him.

—ROBERT SHECKLEY

CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE (FEBRUARY)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from page 4)

powder, when nothing else will work. We can fill 196 pages every other month with really good science fiction. We can't do it on a monthly schedule. Nobody can.

Transposed western and detective stories cosmetically disguised as science fiction, oversexed *Playboy* rejections, witless space wars, extraterrestrial spies, post-atomic societies, biblical greats who turn out to be aliens or visitors from the future, cave-dweller Ugh who discovers how to chip flint or make fire or meets the gods with six arms or gray-flannel buckskins, the road or valley that proves to be a time fault into the future or past, good guy and bad guy marooned on an asteroid, psionics that have long psickened us with their psenseless psamenesses — there are enough of these literary cinders to fill any number of slagpile magazines.

But GALAXY quality? Enough for 196 packed pages every two months is all we dare hope for, all we can safely promise.

• By actual page count, the gigantic new GALAXY will be giving you from 36 to 76 more pages than any of its rivals. That means more stories, more art, more printing, more paper, costlier binding, added shipping charges — when GALAXY all along has been the most expensively produced magazine in this field.

The mathematics of publishing are as straight as in any other business: improve and enlarge your package and your costs go up, so you have to charge more. And the economies are the same: keep price increase to a minimum by keeping production high. And the savings to the customer are identical: a lot more magazine for only a little more money.

Almost all our competitors offer 130 pages @ 35¢. The new GALAXY offers 196 pages @ 50¢. That's half again as much for only 15¢ more. As mentioned before, we are betting that readers know a lavish bargain when they see one — as if a bet that people bright enough to read science fiction also know elementary arithmetic is any sort of gamble.

Now add the factor of quality — GALAXY quality, proved over eight years — and the equation is complete: the most of the best for the least.

SO much for size and cost. Now let's do a *really* thorough job of restyling!

It is the better part of a decade since we asked you to help shape *all* our policies — which you did so magnificently that you gave GALAXY the greatest science fiction following on Earth. But you haven't had the opportunity of changing your vote, or reaffirming it, and many of you came in after the balloting was closed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well, GALAXY is again *your* magazine. Your suggestions *will* be followed. Let's detail that statement and see just how inclusive it is:

• To begin with, the heart of the magazine — stories. With all those extra pages, there are lots of combinations we can use for editorial balance. Magazines generally strive for very long contents pages by using very short stories and only a few medium-length novelets — a policy that makes sense *only* if readers prefer short stories to long ones. Well, do you? Or would you rather have the short stories held down, even if they make the contents page look synthetically hefty, and more novelets and novellas? Or do you have other ideas on content and balance?

• How about serials? The best solution — running them complete — can't be done; they'd squeeze out everything else in the issue. Worse yet, that would also kill book, paperbound reprint and club sales for the authors — book publishers won't touch novels that have appeared complete in single issues. With 196 pages, we can run them in two equal installments and still have plenty of room for other material. There's a two-month wait, true, but isn't that better than three or four monthly installments? Before you decide, think if you'd have been willing to miss reading *The Demolished Man, Gravy Planet, The Puppet Masters, The Stars My Destination* — and now *Time Killer.*

It's a tough decision. That's why we ask you to help make it.

• What do you think of articles? Is our science department a good solution? If so, why — and how can it be made better? If not, what would you prefer?

• Do you like our editor's page? Should it be lighter? Heavier? Not at all?

• You voted against a letter column back in 1950, a big surprise because we like them in newspapers and magazines, and had planned to have one. Is it that you fear a letter column *must* be juvenile or pedantic? It needn't be, if it's shut down when no interesting mail comes in. What's your vote now, eight years later?

• How about our book reviews?

• Any thoughts on our cover and inside art, layouts, typography?

• In short, if you had a magazine of your own, what would it be like? Tell us and we'll do our honest best to make GALAXY as close as possible to your idea of an ideal magazine.

EVERY magazine should have a revolution every few years. This one has put back the roses in our cheeks, a spring in our walk, a joyous glint in our eyes.

Crusade, everyone?

— H. L. GOLD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW GIANT 196 PAGES

•

NOW THE LAST WORD

Here is the next-to-final decision on the giant new 196-page GALAXY:

Despite price increase, we agreed that old subscriptions will be fulfilled issue for issue.

But then we wondered how non-subscribers would feel if they could not take advantage of this deal. Frustrated, we decided, and so here is the last decision of all:

For 30 days only, your new and renewal and gift subscriptions will be honored at the old rate of $3.50 for 12 sisues.

Two necessary exceptions. First, the offer applies only to the U.S., Canada, Mexico, South and Central America, and U.S. possessions. Second, the cover, as always, was printed before this issue came off the press. The $3.50 for 1 year, offer is intended to mean $3.50 for 12 issues and the two-year offer must be rescinded; economics just won't stretch that far. You can subscribe to more than 12 issues if you wish, but at the $3.50 rate only.

Just 30 days, remember. And remember too that this offer will not be repeated.

GALAXY Publishing Corp., 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y.

Enter my subscription for the New Giant 196 page Galaxy for:

12 Issues @ $3.50 ..... 24 Issues @ $7.00 ..... ($1.00 additional per 12 issues for foreign)

Name..... Address.....

City..... Zone..... State.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There's nothing nebulous about that cluster of science fiction luminaries . . . and more will be appearing in our future sparkling issues.

It's only natural that GALAXY should have a constellation of famous writers. Our rates to authors are the highest in the field, our editorial policy the most challenging.

But GALAXY is not committed to big names only. You'll also see uncharted stars flare to sudden brilliance: the first magnitudes in other fields streaking into science fiction . . . the giants of the next decade hurling out their first flaming, molten prose.

Subscribe now to insure not missing any star-studded issues of GALAXY. You don't have to use the coupon; it's for your convenience, not ours.

Galaxy Publishing Corp.
421 Hudson St.
New York 14, N. Y.

Start my subscription to GALAXY with the_____issue.
I enclose (check one)

$3.50 for 1 year_____ $6.50 for 2 years_____
$1.00 additional Foreign Postage Per Year

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY_____ P. O. ZONE_____ STATE_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED